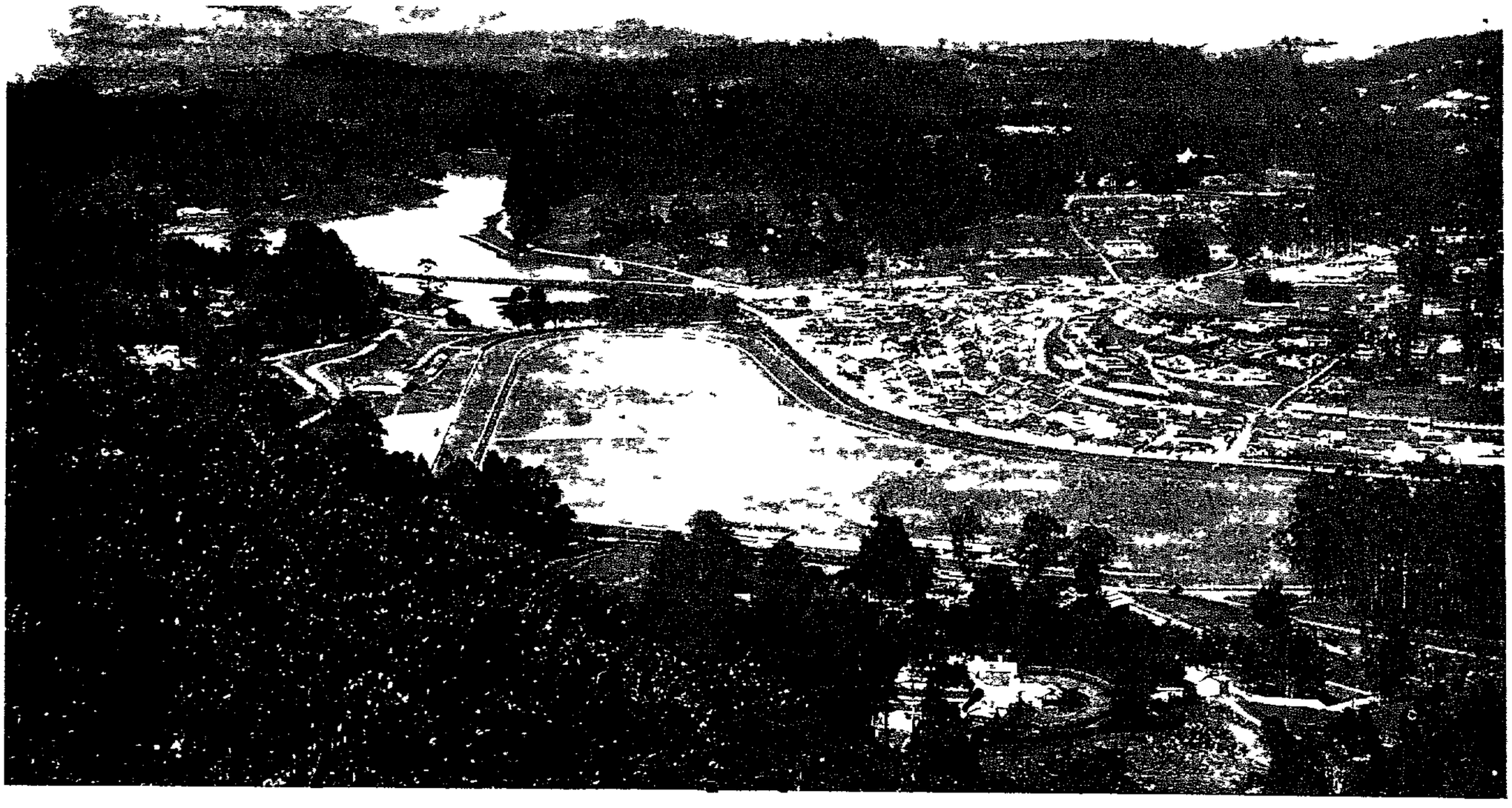
ROUGHING IT IN SOUTHERN INDIA.


IMPERIAL



OOTACAMUND THE LAKE, RACE COURSE AND NATIVE TOWN

ROUGHING IT

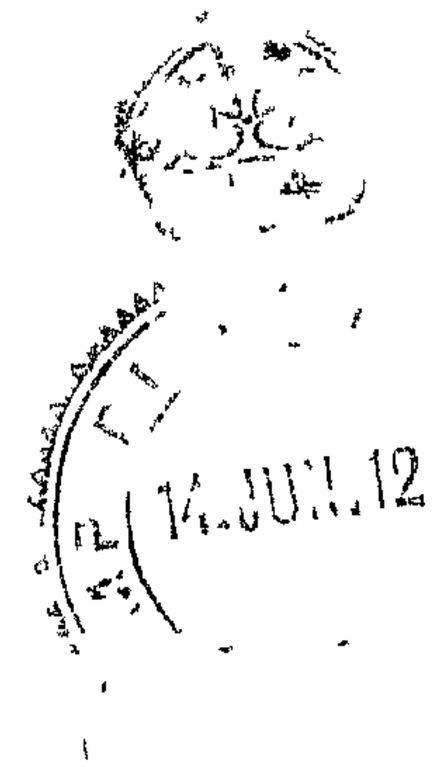
IN SOUTHERN INDIA

BY

MRS. M. A. HANDLEY

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1911

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

'F'

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ROUGHING IT IN SOUTHERN INDIA

CHAPTER I

Duties and pleasures of a Forest Officer—Vernaculars of Southern India—Story about the 'boy'—The cook—A new toast-rack—The *tunny-ketch* and 'little Master Cyril'—Cook and the soup—The cook's *pulli*—The *durzai*.

By way of preface to these notes of experiences shared some years ago with my husband, a Forest Officer in Southern India, I should like to say that every word entered here is literally true. All the incidents recorded were seen and heard by ourselves as we travelled from one district to another through that fascinating land, excepting the few relating to personal friends, and are not made up from mere hearsay.

People can only speak or write from their own point of view; ours was always an unconventional one. Not ours the ordinary station life of India, bubbling over with gossip, commonly called 'gup.' Our house at headquarters, wherever that happened to be, was really more a place for the storing of our belongings than a home. Once on the road, whether under tents, or in jungle-huts, then we were at home directly, and the friends one makes under such rather rough and tumble circumstances are friends for a lifetime. Not that the life is of necessity a rough one; those used to it contrive very luxurious, or at any rate comfortable, makeshifts, which are not to be called hardships. Equally with my husband I found station life very flat when we returned to it—which had to be now and again, —and entirely devoid of *verve* or even interest. As to what

people thought of us, we were called, to our faces, 'jungle-*wallahs*' (jungle-folk), and such indeed we were.

Plenty of books have been, and will continue to be, written on Anglo-Indian social life—some true, or partly so. I only write of our lives, and how they ran, as I have said, in untrodden ways. Should our experiences seem tame to others, I can only say that they were not so to us, or to those who shared them with us at the time.

From the story of our wanderings, composed, as it must be, of the more interesting or amusing episodes that might occur, and of descriptions of the natural beauties through which we passed, it might easily be imagined that the duties of a Forest Officer were pretty light, carrying with them what most energetic Englishmen, if at all inclined to out-door pursuits, would simply revel in, namely, constant change of scene and scenery, and sylvan occupation, dignified by the name of duty; all heightened by the excitements of sport—*shikar* as we called it—at every turn, and in all forms. All the better if they took him along unbeaten tracks, as being so much the less shot over and harried.

But it was not altogether so. The responsibilities and risks necessarily taken by Forest officials are recognised by the Government they serve, a certain additional rate of salary being granted them, known commonly, and rather grimly, as 'blood money.' Other men can, and do, avoid fever-haunted localities, the reputation of which is very quickly established; they can choose their own time of year; all places are not equally bad all the year round, and fever has its special seasons; for instance, at the foot of the hilly, coffee-growing districts when the lovely, jessamine-scented blossom is out, then is malaria at its worst. There is no escape then, and all who are able to do so leave their estates, and seek a healthier clime.

For a Forest Officer there are no seasons except those with relation to his business, which includes the planting

up of fresh tracts, conserving forests (hence the designations of 'Conservator,' 'Deputy Conservator,' and so on, all through the grades), the supplying of timber to merchants for shipbuilding, masts, etc.; produce-collecting of spices, honey, beeswax, silk-cotton, turpentine, and many other articles of commerce. His work takes him anywhere, and at any time, if need arise. He is fortunate when, by drainage or cultivation, some deadly, dreaded area has been reclaimed from the fever-fiend. But he has no choice; go he must often into the heart of a poison-breathing jungle, or along the margin of some malaria-haunted swamp, his supplies carried by any available men, possibly from villages where smallpox or cholera is rife, either in full knowledge of the fact or in ignorance of it, as may happen; in either case push on he must; if his own coolies are down with fever others have to be impressed, somehow, anyhow. He is *paid* for risking his life, and the lives of his people—for sowing seeds which *will*, sooner or later, come to the fatal harvesting. 'Blood money' indeed! A pity were there nothing of enjoyment or zest to counterbalance such hazards.

Some men are of the pavements, others shun all that savours of the city, and are at their happiest when turning over stones, looking for some new 'find' in the way of beetles, frogs, and so forth, or searching out plants. Such an one was my husband, and such were most of the men in his service. As with other professions, so with this; some men merely drift into it, and, cordially hating the life and all it entails, are of no good. My husband *loved* his work, which, though arduous and dangerous, had a fascination for him that no other could have afforded. Above all it included the supreme delights of *shikar*, the pursuit of which will take a born hunter anywhere—but only those who have the passion in their blood will understand.

The early days of our married life were passed in the plains and hill-ranges of Southern India, mostly on the west

coast; much of it in travelling and camping out in tents, or, during the rainy seasons, in bamboo huts. These were sometimes run up temporarily, in a few hours, just where it seemed suitable for the moment, or made to last from year to year if the place was to be revisited in future inspection tours.

My husband, whom I will call 'F.', was bound to be away from headquarters, on forest work, for six months out of the twelve. These were spent in traversing the vast tracts of wild jungle wherein lay his business, the work being parcelled out in sub-divisions amongst European, Eurasian,[1] and native subordinates, all subject to him, as he was to his chief, the Conservator.

F.'s success in carrying out his duties was the greater for his gift of being able to pick up in a week or two the dialect of the locality, wherever he might be, and, in a very short time, to make himself so conversant with it as to be able to dispense with the services of an interpreter, very much to the advantage of ignorant villagers in the case of grievances which would otherwise have been righted or wronged by the gift of a rupee more or less.

The dialects of the country were numerous, as were the quite distinct tribes, all collected in one general district; low-country men and hill men; townsfolk and jungle folk; none of these consorting with each other—differing in type, habits and language because differing in origin. One of the jungle tribes, for example, plainly showed its Kaffir derivation, being woolly-haired, wide-lipped and wide-nosed, descendants of slaves brought over in past times by Arab traders to the west coast ports—Calicut, Cannanore, and others.

The vernaculars of Southern India are mainly Tamil and Telegu, excepting on the west coast of Malabar, where Malayalam is the universal speech. So curious in sound

[1] Europe-Asia, a half-breed of the two.

is this last that a legend is told of a certain ruler who sent men to all parts of his dominions to learn the varying tongues. When those sent to Malabar returned, they only rattled peas in a gourd, narrowly escaping death for daring to jest before majesty, but they assured their prince that that was the sound of Malayalam, which was not to be learnt by any stranger.

Of Tamil there are two kinds—High Tamil and Low Tamil; three indeed, if one include the lowest of all, which is only used by people of the lowest castes, such as coolies, house-sweepers, scavengers, and also by the casteless, such as the Wuddahs, a folk who dig out and eat rats.

The network of caste is too intricate to be understood by Western minds. Roughly speaking, 'caste' means 'class,' though, to a native of India it involves an immense deal more than the idea of class does to us, religion entering into the question. The distinctions of class are social, secular, and alterable; those of caste, religious and immutable.

High Tamil, as against Low, is as the English, say, of Macaulay's *Essays*, to the ordinary daily talk of educated persons, or the diction of newspapers. The literature and poetry of Southern India is all written in High Tamil, which, derived from Sanscrit and retaining the grand sound of that noblest of languages, is very beautiful to the ear.

The ordinary Low Tamil of one's household servants is easily picked up, though the use of English is almost universal amongst these people now.

We moved about a great deal, and I acquired a smattering of some seven dialects, forgetting each in turn as another was wanted—in this falling considerably short of F.'s real gift, for he never forgot or mixed them up.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and what I said was often far enough from what I meant. On one occasion when my husband was absent, and a letter had arrived to

to say that he was coming immediately, I told the servants to hasten in every way, for 'that very common fellow, your master, is coming!' the termination of an 'n' in the word *verān* (coming), as I spoke it, instead of the strong 'r' sound in *verār*, making all the difference in what I said, and what they, in their innate còurtesy, understood and accepted with deep salaams, as meaning 'that greatest of living masters, your master.'

The very general 'n' termination to Low Tamil words gives a nasal sound, or impression, whereas the final 'r' has a sonorous, rolling, and fine effect, conveying to the ear the knowledge that it is a question of a personage, not of a mere person. Herein lies the distinction between the two varieties of the one language.

High Tamil, again, is spoken in the Courts of Justice, in lectures and so on, and is familiar to all educated natives, as has been already said; even they do not employ it in common life.

The third grade of Tamil, though understood, is never used by any one with pretension to breeding. This was amusingly illustrated one day when we heard a lordly-looking Brahmin gentleman trying to give an order to a very low-caste person—his baggage coolie—circumstances at the moment obliging him so to condescend.

The Brahmin could very well have explained himself, and fluently too; would, no doubt, have done so, had we not been within hearing. As it was, F. gave the order, and the two solemnly exchanged salaams, not a smile on either face. That Brahmin knew that we knew; so did the coolie, for there was an amused grin as he now did what he understood was wanted of him.

Most of us, mistresses of households, knew somewhat more of the language than we owned to, finding it to be a good plan on the whole, though we did not always relish what we caught.

A friend of mine was in want of something, and called to the 'boy,'[1] who would seldom be out of hearing—nor was he to-day. She called several times without receiving a reply, but heard him talking to himself, and this is what he was murmuring, in his own dialect, of course: 'I hear your goose-voice calling, I shall go when I like!' She told me that she felt furious, and also much like laughing outright, but that would never have done. Her husband, close by in his office, had also heard and noticed; his short, sharp summons for 'Boy!' was scarcely uttered when it was followed on the instant by 'Yes, Sar!' Then came: 'Why didn't you answer the mistress when she called three times? You answered me, the master, immediately.'

Came the trembling, yet candid reply:

'Missus plenty talkee only, Master beatee,' which, however, was quite untrue of that master. Evidently to know the vernacular in our fashion was not an unmixed advantage.

In my first enthusiasm with the novelty of Indian housekeeping, I kept careful watch on the daily expenditure. The plan was, as my earlier counsellors (not the later and better advised ones) taught me, to give the cook a certain sum for table purchases, and he would render his account every morning.

Though careful not to find needless fault, it seemed to me that sixpennyworth of salt—that is to say several pounds—was a good deal to be used in a general way, daily, so I mentioned it. I was told that salt was very dear, but the cook admitted that that was certainly too much for one day's consumption; he would make the person who wasted it (for, of course, that was somebody else) smart heavily for not looking after our interests, as did he, who had the buying of things. After this, twopennyworth each day seemed enough for us, but several new items came into the list. I knew the meaning of most words of everyday

[1] Indoor servant, derived from *bhoy*, bearer.

use in the way of eatables, but these were strange, and needed explanation. On my questioning the cook he said that the things themselves did not exist anywhere out of India that he knew of, so there were no English names for them; they were very special spices—'ee-spices' as he pronounced it—for our complicated curries.

I was aware that many ingredients did go to the making of a good curry, and believed, but on my asking F. he said that all those words meant the same thing, namely *salt* over again! *oopoo* being the Tamil, *nimmuck* the Hindustani, and so on. Thus did the cook ring the changes, and, though he may have felt checkmated when told we didn't want so many flavours in our curries, most certainly he scored eventually in some other way, since that was his business.

I remember, too, being put to bitter shame at dinner one evening when, friends being with us, an extra number of 'accidentals' had been brought in by F.—his habit, and quite usual: Indian hospitality is very elastic. I had forgotten the new system then being tried, by another friend's advice, namely, to give out the day's supplies on a liberal scale, providing enough for extra heads, and to *superintend* this matter—until I saw that *some of the dishes would not go round*! My husband saw, too, and guessed how it had happened. Thinking the best way to help me was to face it boldly, he asked me if this were another experiment, and so turned the edge of my misery. But never again!

After that lesson, which I firmly believe was planned (for left to himself our 'butler' would have been equal to any emergency), I gave up following any advice except that of F.'s which was not to interfere; then all would be well; we should never go through such horrible moments again; the butler might, perhaps, take toll himself, but he could at any rate be trusted to see that no one else did. A lady friend also said she believed in leaving native servants

alone. That counsel proved the best of all. Yet it was not always easy to follow it literally if you *saw* what went on.

Things wanted hot and crisp, such as toast, are often made just outside in the back verandah which every bungalow possesses. That was the case one morning when I happened to leave the breakfast-table and step outside for an instant. Beside a clear charcoal fire, ideal for making toast, a busy servant was squatted rather awkwardly, one foot stuck out sideways, the better to serve for a toast-rack, and three bits of toast, ready for our breakfast, were standing in it already! Ingenious devices such as this are not apt to make one feel like an angel: I took up a bit of toast, meaning, no doubt, to throw it away, but threw it at him instead. For this impulsive action on my part my husband had to pay some £12, the expenses of purification ceremonies entailed on the man. He bore me no malice, nor even minded very much; but he, a man, had been hit by a woman, in the presence of others; no matter if the woman were an English *dursani*, the disgrace to him was the same.

Flitting about the back premises the *tunny-ketch* may often be seen. She is a kitchen helper, generally of the cook's providing, sometimes his wife, but that is inadvisable. *Tunny* is Tamil for water, and has reference to some of her duties, but the composite word is untranslatable, at any rate it has no English equivalent. She it is who feeds the fowls, offering to bring her own to peck with yours, that you may get more eggs, she says; and who has to be prevented from sticking feathers through the nostrils of broody hens—her idea being that it will fidget them and so put them off their instinct to sit on their eggs; who washes the vegetables and the rice (woe to her if she leave a stone in it for your teeth to find!); who makes the most delicious, hot *chupatties*[1]

[1] *Chupatties* are cakes made of flour and water, light as feathers, though unleavened, and must be eaten hot.

for breakfast; who sits before a flat, hollowed stone with another—a round one—in her hands, grinding the fresh-mint chutneys, and the curry powders and paste. What can she not put into them? unless, as is very likely the case, she is grinding her own at the same time and requires ingredients for them also. From the least to the greatest, every one is at the mercy of the *tunny-ketch*. Such work as she does is *infra dig*. for a man; the cook would scorn it. Yet, let a master be in difficulties, say he is an ill-paid bachelor, or a man trying to send home money to wife and children, living as best he can, managing on a tenth of his pay with one servant, and everything will be done for him; his curry will be spicy, his rice white, with never a stone in it; he knows not how, he does not ask. The truth is these people are contradictions, but they win respect, in some cases even love. Not all, however.

One morning when we were staying at a friend's house the tea was very nasty, with what is called 'couch' about it, that is a twang, half-taste, half-smell; it was sent away that fresh might be made, but that proved just as bad, quite unaccountably. The next minute some commotion was heard, and the *tunny-ketch* came running from the back regions, holding her hands behind her, and crying out that she had been burnt by '*chinna pulli* Cyril *Doray*' (little Master Cyril), who had taken a piece of flaming wood off the fire and laid it across her when she was stooping down. As she wore her 'cloth,'[1] like all of her kind, amply folded but trained smoothly round her person, it had the better chance of being singed through and through, which it certainly was. Cyril, the child of the house—a five-year-old of much directness of purpose (which in a general way we found very engaging)—stood by with an exultant, not repentant, air. Being asked why he had done such a

[1] A native woman's dress consists of one long length of coloured muslin.

wicked thing, he said that he had seen her fill the kettle at the duck-pond, and that was how he had punished her!

One may provide everything in the way of utensils that is thought necessary in an English kitchen, but these people will prefer their own makeshifts.

One night, when we were dining out, the soup struck us as peculiar; calling itself 'clear' it was muddy, and tasted of the 'couch' already mentioned. Our hostess, Mrs. A., said she had an idea about it, and she left the table telling us not to wait dinner for her. In about a quarter of an hour she returned, saying we should have a new cook by breakfast-time next morning. She had gone to see whether the soup had been strained in the way she guessed, and that directly she entered the kitchen she knew she was right, for a corner of the cook's own wearing apparel was hanging down loose against his leg, wet and wrung looking, with tell-tale scraps of vegetables adhering to it; evidently *that* was what he had used as a strainer. The cloth being very thin, and not much of it, the happy thought occurred to her to let him try how he liked its flavour, so she ordered him to rinse it out in warm water, and then stood by while he gulped down the dark decoction; that he found it anything but nice she could see from his face.

Going into my own kitchen one day a comical and unexpected sight met my eye. The cook's children were not allowed there, but on this occasion a very small one had been smuggled in, and there it was seated on the uncooked round of beef just brought from market! The position was no doubt selected as being softer than the floor for its small person, and not too high in case it should topple off. The child was in gala dress, having on a brand new and stiff pink shirt of odd proportions, being very wide for the length; its hair, not yet black, only silkily brown, was plaited from temple to temple in a continuous line of but a pin's breadth, so few and so fine were the hairs composing

it; the little face seemed all eyes—would have seemed weirdly so to one not conversant with native customs—owing to the antimony thickly stained round them, deepening the curve of the long lashes with its blue-black, inky shadows; the plump wrists and ankles were all a-tinkle with silver bangles, enough in themselves to afford happiness and occupation to such a being, and the child smiled up at me confidingly, knowing no reason why it should not be there. The father had turned at my entrance, then, looking down at his *pulli* [1] as if greatly surprised to see it there—probably remembering certain threats on my part—said lamely that someone must have brought it in, which was quite obvious. However, the little figure was such a perfect Cupid in bronze and pink shirt, and the man's pride in its adornments, and his solicitude for its present comfort, struck me as so touching that I could not say a word as to the kitchen, let alone the beef, not being the proper place for it.

Eight o'clock came, and as we sat down to dinner I cannot deny that the thought of that round of beef weighed somewhat upon my mind; but F., to whom I had told the story, said it didn't matter, he should eat it just the same, for after all we only knew that one, and comparatively harmless stage, in its adventures ere it reached our plates; generally we knew nothing. However, to my surprise—as I had not credited the cook with so much tact—the entire *menu* had been changed, that the non-appearance of the beef might be less noticeable; moreover, the cook eclipsed himself throughout the meal.

Another important person in one's household is the tailor, always called the *durzai*; he it is who does all the mending and the making of everyday clothes. One spot in the verandah is his by appropriation, and there he spreads his mat and takes up his position at nine o'clock every morning,

[1] Child (Tamil).

never raising his eyes from his work or uncrossing his legs—except, maybe, to recross them the other way—till punctually at mid-day he absents himself for a couple of hours, then back to his stitching again till five o'clock, when he walks off.. The *durzai* cannot originate, but he can copy a pattern to a fault ; patches even may be reduplicated, so conscientious is he ; sad cases of such a mistake are on record. So clever is he that he will darn an unlucky cut in the best tablecloth with a thread or two drawn from the cloth itself, so that none shall be able to find the place again ; or he will deal with a rent in the baize of club or mess-room billiard table in such a manner that not a ball will swerve there. Men not in regular employment as *durzais* go up and down the country doing this last sort of work only, and find plenty to occupy them ; they carry with them some green cloth, and that supplies their darning material.

If, however, the verandah *durzai* is very clever, and has his virtues, he is also generally very obstinate ; this arises from his conservatism, the inherited bent of the *durzai* mind on which fashion has no influence.

My *durzâi* was once making me some muslin dresses at a time when I was daily expecting a box from England, and the cutting-out of the sleeves had been postponed awaiting its arrival. When the box came the new fashion in sleeves was specially pointed out for his admiration, but he shook his head with disapproval : 'Not nice hump, plenty smooth nice,' meaning that the old, close-fitting shape was the proper one, whereas these were very full, and raised at the shoulders ; and he actually suggested that they should be cut down to the old pattern ! I was of a different opinion, however, and bade him cut the muslin by the new pattern. It did strike me that he was extra obstinate about what he called 'the hump,' but knowing that he well understood my wishes I left him to his work, little guessing how far he would carry his determination. When I went round again

it was to find that not only had he cut the new muslin by the old pattern, but he had mutilated the beauteous sleeves of the three English frocks down to his own ideas of what was right !

As may be supposed, for quite a long time I felt anything but angelic about this, and much like sending the *durzai* away with an allusion to his dominating trait at the end of his 'character'; only I knew that, on having it read to him, he had it in his power to hinder my getting another good *durzai* in his place. Many a time such reflections held one in check with regard to native servants and subordinates.





TANK AT COIMBATORE—SUNSET

CHAPTER II

The cardamom forests—Hamadryads—An easy palanquin—Jail industries—Burmese *dacoits*—Mode of travelling—The Churmers—Porters and their chants—Machans—Beauties of the forest—*Pishashas*—A clever travelling cook—Ayah and beau—Smallpox scare.

THE gathering of the cardamom crop was the occasion of one of my earliest forest expeditions, starting from our then headquarters, Coimbatore.

Cardamoms are a government monopoly, and a rigorously guarded one. The spice is rather expensive; it is largely used in India, but not half appreciated in this country. Those who do not know the plant must imagine tiny, gummy, black seeds (which constitute the spice, and are most aromatic and delicate), closely packed in a small husk, or bag, about as big as a currant. It grows on low bushes, and the forest tracts where it is found are not very safe; at least I took care, when we were up there, not to wander far, in case the story were true as to certain fearful snakes which are said to live in them—hamadryads, or snake-eating snakes, which will chase human beings—perchance catch them up, too—but are, fortunately, not very numerous, thanks to their own cannibalism.

When we were to encamp pretty high up, the way I mostly travelled, if not riding, was in a palanquin carried by several men. Mine had been made for me at the local jail, and was a very light affair of cane or rattan, cushioned, and fitted with iron bars, and having two rings for a bamboo pole to pass through, overhead, so that the person within could be carried without jolting, and be able either to sit up or lie

down. An awning was stretched over the pole, fastening, at will, to the sides of the palanquin. This palanquin was made from F.'s design, and the kind became quite a feature of the jail industries.

Regarding these industries, a few words may here be said. In the jails of India work is provided for convicts, some of whom, when their life sentences (twenty years) have expired, are allowed to marry and settle down in the neighbourhood of the jail, having become attached to their now familiar surroundings. These men—Malays, Burmese, Chinese, together with their odd-featured progeny, thus form small colonies of good and industrious citizens, fraternising with all around them.

The prisoners are taught many trades, one being the weaving of a noted cloth for sporting purposes: this is called *shikar* cloth, and is of a heather-mixture colour (a sort of brown-green leaf tint) so as to be unnoticeable amongst the forest foliage—a most vital point! It is made of a very strongly-twisted cotton fibre, so tough and untearable as to turn, and resist thorns. And it need be strong, for some of the thorns are small spikes, such as those of the 'wait-a-bit'—a descriptive name enough—and of many other shrubs. Thickets of these need tough clothes, and a good axe, to get through them at all, therefore one's servants and the camp staff, peons, etc., are provided with plenty of suitable clothing of this *shikar* cloth. How the baggage coolies make their way without being scratched and torn to pieces is a wonder, for their modicum of apparel is small protection; certainly the weight of it counts for nothing at all. My own jungle costume was a Norfolk jacket (with cartridge belt and numerous pockets) and a short skirt, also made of *shikar* cloth.

In these jails, besides cloth, they weave table and household linen; some white, and of coarse texture, and some, of the very daintiest damask imaginable, in colours. Furniture

too is made, in ebony and teak (the Indian oak), with wonderfully intricate 'diamond'-patterned canework, for chairs, couches, and the like.

All this seems rather like an advertisement for the jails, but it is simply written down as one among many pleasant memories of the land, beloved, as I believe, by every one who has made their home there for any length of time.

A Parsee jailer who showed us round one of these places told us about the Burmese *dacoits*,[1] that they have a strange custom of embedding their jewels and gems—stolen, or legitimate property—in the fleshy parts of their bodies, where, being invisible, they are secure. The convict who was asked to show us his treasures, or rather to let us feel the hard lumps, which were in reality those precious stones, was plainly proud to do so. The very tiniest scars remained, showing where incisions had been made in order to force the stones into the flesh, which had completely closed over them and healed. There were dozens of such places on the arms, shoulders, and thighs of this man, who was a noted dacoit, or had been so in his time; his sentence was nearly out now, and he was to be sent back to his own country, taking his worldly wealth, very literally, with him. He had learnt three trades in the jail; but his father before him having served a term in Burmah for dacoity, he might very likely, as he himself candidly said, take up the paternal occupation again on his release.

When we were travelling my ayah preferred to be carried in a country contrivance, which was just a large armchair slung between poles, and having a foot-rest; quite easy, but not adapted for lying down in.

The road for some sixty miles from headquarters was good enough for riding; that is, till we reached the foot of the hills, when the climbing began. Servants, dogs,

[1] Highway robbers and murderers.

baggage, etc., came on in bullock-carts travelling at a very slow rate, and covering on an average not more than two miles an hour. Some, however, had been sent on ahead with supplies.

Amongst our post-bullocks, as far as we could prevent it, there was no tail-twisting or breaking—the method adopted all over India to induce these deliberate animals to hurry. The poor creatures may be seen with their tails in perfect zigzags owing to this practice. Nothing maddened me more when travelling in a hired coach than to hear the sickening snap and crack of the joints as the driver applied this torture to his 'biles.'[1] He would not do it more than once on that journey, you may be sure, though no doubt he thought, privately, that he had some strange kind of idiot as a fare!

On one occasion when we gave up riding, the track being too steep, at least for *my* nerves, and not affording any pleasant footing for the horses themselves if weighted, a set of little people were in readiness to carry me in my palanquin. They had engaged to do so, that is to say. Very quaint they were; not professional bearers, but leather-workers, or rather tanners, and therefore of the lowest caste, almost *outcast*, as one might express it; for no one else associates with them, their trade in the skins of killed animals forbidding it. No other bearers were available just then or there for a short distance, or we should never have employed the unpleasant little creatures at all.

Their native name I am not now sure of, though I think it was 'Churmers': they were very dark-skinned, with shocks of black hair; small and squat and very lightly clothed, and very, very evil-smelling. Two men of the real bearer sort would have sufficed for such a light palanquin as mine—with relays, of course—but it took four of these

[1] Bullocks.

little porters at a time, so ten were engaged to make it easy for them; four and four, change about, and two over in case of breakdown.

A short trial by these gentlemen of the palanquin with me in it (though I only weighed seven stone in those days) convinced them that it was beyond their strength—sheer cruelty to force them to it—and they began to cry so piteously and noisily that it was quite impossible to go on causing such suffering. Those trying to bear up under the burden cried, those who had relinquished it cried, and the two odd ones cried in anticipation. Essaying the climb myself, clinging to the strong creepers and vines everywhere to one's hand, seemed preferable to sitting between four sobbing and perspiring mortals. That they really suffered it was impossible to believe, for no sooner had they set me down, with a great show of care and with very loud and needless grunts of exhaustion and relief, than they picked up that featherweight of an empty palanquin, forgetting to change hands with it in their glee, and scrambled along like monkeys; chattering, too, like monkeys, and showing their brilliantly white teeth: no more tears!

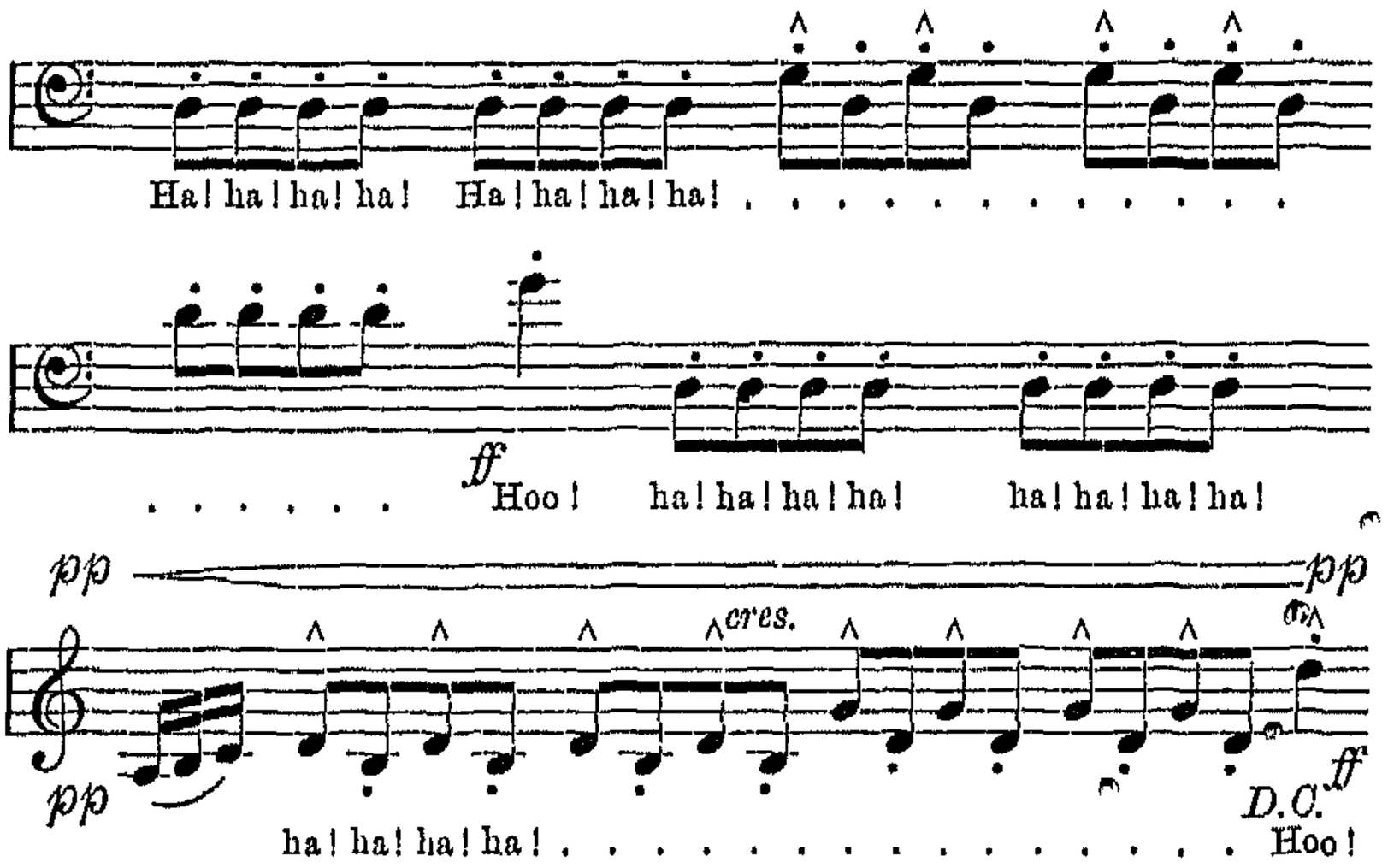
But this plan did not answer; I could not get along very fast, and we had the ascent to make before the sun should get too powerful. Fortunately the peons [1] were able before long to find four stout hill-men willing to undertake the required duty. The difficulty at the moment we had wanted bearers was due to the fact that a very special festival was in full swing, from which no one could, or wished to, be spared, barring the poor little Churmers aforesaid. *Their* company was never wanted, owing, among other reasons, to their repulsive manner of feeding on anything and everything—carrion for choice: of living things they liked

[1] Pronounced pewns. Government servants (corresponding somewhat to orderlies in military service) who always attended F. and all Government officials.

grubs and horrible-looking larvæ—horrible, that is, regarded as food; of dead, the longer dead the better.

These new men, two and two, to change with each other—no more, though not professional bearers—made nothing of their burden, chanting rhythmically the while, with deep chest notes, in perfect time and harmony, as they kept step.

BEARERS' CHANT.



I can recall those chants now, and always greatly enjoyed those journeys if for them alone. Bearers, boatmen, sawyers, axemen—all have their distinctive chants, differing in the various localities and presidencies of India. Carrying loads is no effort to professional bearers, though they could not do so long or so straining a day's work in the fields, or in any other way, certain sets of muscles having been cultivated at the expense of the rest. To illustrate this, I remember seeing a frail-looking old woman bent beneath her load, which was a very long one, of thin branches for firewood. She was carrying it on her head with a cloth pad under it; it turned out to be for our use, and the old woman the grandmother of one of our *syces*, or grooms. Her load weighed sixty pounds! She was so accustomed to it as to be surprised at *my* surprise.

When the hill was breasted, and we had reached our halting-place, my four bearers put me down quietly, without fuss or visible and embarrassing signs of relief: they grinned at me in a friendly way, these stalwarts, pleased to have accomplished the ascent, and, I think, proud of their own thews and muscles. It had been a stiff climb, and it was easy to make them understand how much appreciated and admired was their superior strength. These men, who belonged to the Kurumber tribe, were old acquaintances of F.'s—quite old friends, indeed, from having shared many a night's vigil or long tramp with him on previous tours hereabout, particularly two of them, named Botha and Ika. A very little will make friends for you of these most simple folk, and ever afterwards the *Dursani* (mistress), who had not hitherto appeared on the scene, was bracketed in their loyalty and affection with the *Doray* (master): greater could not be—he was their ideal. Of good caste, finely built, with keen, steady-eyed faces, all were clever shots with their bows and arrows and treasured old muzzle-loaders. Breech-loaders they did not possess, and most intensely interested were they in F.'s battery, for he had a great variety of guns and rifles. One little beauty, by Holland & Holland, a miniature Express, was mine, and they were never tired of looking at its delicate mechanism; but for the heavy elephant rifle they felt nothing less than awe. Most of their time in camp was spent, by hours together, enviously watching the peons rub up and clean these treasures; their delight and pride was to be set to cast bullets for them. Whenever we were in that neighbourhood that special quartette attended us in our expeditions, with others of their own choosing, who, *they* saw to it, were to be trusted for carrying spare rifles or for sitting up all night with the *Doray* in trees, on a *machan*—pronounced *machawn*—to shoot a marauding panther.

A *machan* is a platform made of bamboos or boughs,

woven very strongly and firmly, and fixed from limb to limb of some suitably high tree. From this safe perch watch is kept over a 'kill'—some slain animal, to which the slayer is expected to return. But that is not the way used with tigers, be it understood.

For the above-mentioned duty the chosen men must be warranted never to sneeze or cough, or to drop—still less to let off—a rifle, out of sheer excitement, as has happened only too often in the experience of many a *shikari*.[1] But this is a digression.

What a wonderful climb that was! To make any going possible the men in advance hewed and hacked to right and left through a scene of beauty and marvel of which a Kew palm-house can give but a faint suggestion. Everywhere magnificent giant creepers, some delicate as wreaths of English clematis with gossamer-woven flowers; others so weird-looking as to be almost repellent, with their snake-like stems, thick as one's arm, and strange blood-spotted blossoms—all clinging like iron bands for strength, and, for all their delicacy, equally impassable. The most enchanting ferneries were cut, or torn through, at every step, only to open the way to wilder extravagances of fantastic loveliness. Familiar though it all was to F., yet never losing its charm—the greater, indeed, owing to his botanical knowledge—to me it was a perfect poem for beauty, hitherto unseen and unimagined. India is the only tropical land I know, so I can make no comparisons, but at any rate nothing can surpass the fairy grandeur of those wild jungles.

One tree there is with which the forest seems ablaze when it is in blossom—the 'flame-of-the-forest,' as it is fitly named. The petals are shaped like a parrot's beak, and are of a vivid orange-scarlet. Another, the *sumponghi* (*champak* it is also called), has ivory-hued flowers, shaded and deepening into yellow at the base, and these last are

[1] Sportsman.

intoxicatingly sweet. The 'geranium tree' is just what its name describes, a great forest tree with the loveliest geranium flowers, in velvety pink or mauve, like pelargoniums.

And the rhododendrons! The full splendour of these trees is indeed unknown till seen, as here, in their native land, where they are not so much forest trees as the very forest itself: a whole hillside will be clothed with them. I have in my mind just now certain slopes on the Nilgiris. Their growth is that of an oak—spreading; their foliage is of a deep, shining green, which in season is enamelled with clustered blossom effulgent with glowing crimson or white as driven snow. The remembrance of their glory is a possession rather than a memory.

It was late when we reached the top—or the first place we came to that was sufficiently level to serve for a night's halt. There is no twilight in the tropics, and it is dark at noonday in those forest depths. F. decided to go no farther, chancing it that four jungle paths met just there, showing these to be regular routes for wild animals. Up there men would be rare indeed; there is nothing to take them there, except at such times as the ingathering of the cardamom crop, and then only authorised persons, in bands; singly they would not venture into such solitudes on any account—too many *pishashas*, or devils, about! For Europeans there is never anything to be feared at any time, except from the chance and rare presence of a solitary 'tusker' or 'man-eater' tiger.

Very soon the cook was to be seen squatting before his notion of a range—a row of stones placed at suitable distances for the accommodation of the various cooking pots, each with its fire of crackling sticks beneath. Dinner-time being eight o'clock at home he would contrive, if possible, even amidst the exigences of travel, that we should find no difference. The cooking was his sole business, nothing

else concerned him, except the previous superintending of all his utensils, and the 'Europe-tins' and supplies generally, so that everything needful might be forthcoming for him to set to work directly a halt was called. The larger camp commissariat department was in the hands of others, and included the providing of great quantities of rice for the entire camp use, and the dogs; *gram* and other food for the horses, bullocks, etc.; curry stuff (that is, chillies, dried fish, and such things) and tobacco for the men; medicine and other necessaries; but of the cook no more was expected than the preparing of our meals.

We had a double staff of servants: those attending on us at home, or headquarters, remained there, as their families could neither be left nor brought with us, for they and their families cannot be separated for long. The camp, or travelling staff might have their encumbrances too, but they managed their own affairs in their own way, never bringing them on the scene.

Dinner announced, there would be the never-failing soup, chicken cutlets, curry—tinned lobster was our first favourite—and some sweet, with coffee to wind up. The cook had no idea of forfeiting his good name as a 'travelling cook' for such trifles as brokendown carts or burnt bridges; the greater the odds the more he strove to eclipse himself. I have known ices and iced wine and coffee to appear, as a matter of course, under circumstances seemingly impossible for more than a biscuit or two. No one shall ever say a word against native servants in my hearing!

The ayah was just as clever in her way as the cook; never any telling wanted. We had folding cots, and she would sleep on her mat on the ground with her blankets and hard pillow—her usual habit—in a corner of the tent or close beside my feet.

The camp furniture was soon arranged, *dhurries* being spread over the earth floor and hung snugly around. These


IMPERIAL
LIBRARY



"Our Camp.

are thick cotton rugs, made in all manner of bright colours, wearing and washing as not many English fabrics would.

But my poor ayah! She had not reckoned on everything that befell us that night, and the first was her last in those wilds; for when all was quiet, and our people, our animals, and we ourselves settled to sleep, I heard a curious, unfamiliar sound, as of something snuffing round the tent sides. At first I fancied it might be the ayah snoring, rolled up in her muffling blankets; but no, it was deeper-chested than that!

I whispered to rouse F., who, however, needed no one to do that for him, his attention being always on the *qui vive*—on a hair-trigger, as one might express it—in his beloved jungles, where it truly is the unexpected that mostly happens.

He got up quietly, lifted the tent-fly, and went out into the night 'to frighten *something* away,' he said, when he came back again. It turned out to be a bear inquisitively poking his nose under the tent without having any designs on us—wondering only as to what he had come upon, and quite content to take himself off unharmed.

I can truly say that, though excited and greatly interested, I was not one whit afraid. But my ayah! Nothing could induce her to stay another day, let alone a night, in these, to her, awful jungles; so we had to arrange for her to be conveyed back to civilisation, and I made shift without her. Her description of the dangers and terrors which service with this *Doray* and *Dursani* led people into must have gone the round of the ayah sisterhood, for though we tried, by holding out tempting promises of double pay, none could be persuaded to come to me. However, had one been so procured, the same poor-spiritedness would quite likely have caused her to be more of a clog on our travelling than we liked, so it was just as well as it was.

The day after the ayah's departure one of the peons fell

ill. We suspected smallpox at once, and this it turned out to be, declaring itself unmistakably. Of course, he had to be carried down immediately to the hospital at Coimbatore, the nearest town, and our headquarters. It was a distressing journey for a sick, fevered man; the very rough, jolting descent to the foot of the hills, to begin with, and then a sixty-mile stretch of well-nigh shadeless road; but the level portion was quickly covered, as arrangements were made with the *Tahsildars*[1] to have plenty of fresh bearers in readiness that the litter might go with the least delay possible. Though marked, the man recovered, to our infinite relief, for he was an especially valued and trusted servant. No one else took the infection; but scares like this are upsetting for the time, and we felt uneasy for days. Nothing could be done, however, so we had to chance it and be hopeful.

We always had a good supply of medicines, lint, and so on with us, and ordinary fever or accident cases F. could deal with himself; he had plenty of practice in both! A man is said to be either a fool or a physician by the time he is forty; my husband was not forty then; but living, as we did for months together, far away from a medical man, experience had taught him, at any rate, the 'next best' to do in all cases.

[1] Head-men of villages and in Government service.

CHAPTER III

Elephants, and native methods of harnessing—F.'s reforms—Intelligence of elephants—Rama—*Lantana*—Tree-felling—Toddy and the toddy palm—'Must'—Elephant and rice—The elephant as nurse—Elephant and Mr. W.—The *Doray* to the rescue.

In the timber-haulage department of the Forest Service a large number of elephants were employed, and the treatment customarily meted out to these animals was a constant source of trouble to F. For five years we were stationed in one district, The Wynâd, headquarters Manantavadi, commonly called Manantoddy, comprising the slopes of the coffee-growing areas, and during that time he happily succeeded in bringing about a system very different from the one in vogue when we first went there.

The native method causes awful suffering, the chains and ropes being fastened to the great teeth of the patient animal, forcing them from their sockets, and giving rise to abscesses and injuries of all kinds, to be aggravated by heat and flies.

Also, unless seen to, it would be a very exceptional *mahout* [1] that would think of bestirring himself to take off the pad on his beast's back when halting—a necessary precaution, for under this pad horrible sores sometimes fester.

An elephant which had been thus misused in native hands was sent up to us in the ordinary way for employment in the forests, not at all as a patient for treatment. The poor thing was a shocking sight! Before shooting an elephant, whether tame or in a wild state, a 'permit' is necessary. This F. could easily have obtained on represen-

[1] The man who tends an elephant and drives him, seated on his head.

tation that the animal was past cure, but he preferred giving it the chance of life. With wounds and sores in all parts of its body, its tail seemed in the worst and most hopeless condition, what with flies, heat, and neglect. A swift, sharp stroke best did the work there, and a curative process was started. By dint of poulticing, cleanliness, and taking down to the river to bathe and plaster itself with the healing mud—for elephants know very well how to doctor themselves with river mud and herbage if allowed the opportunity—he was gradually brought round. We petitioned for our patient to be permanently transferred to our establishment; and so he was, becoming in our hands a different creature, fairly strong, and useful for light work, such as fetching fodder of boughs and leaves for other elephants who were equal to a harder strain; he was so very docile, too, that I liked to keep him for my own riding. Suffering in the past had not spoiled that poor animal's temper; quite the opposite, for I should think a gentler beast was never known. A very comfortable seat was arranged for me on his back, to which eminence I climbed easily, helped by the cleverly accommodating hind foot held out for me to stand upon, the elephant kneeling the while.

One of F.'s most beneficial reforms was the harness he planned, and caused to be used, so as to utilise the full strength of the working elephant without all the pull being so disastrously on the teeth. The Indian Government acknowledged this, and it became (in theory) the standing method in all the districts under its jurisdiction; but natives are too conservative for such innovations to be easily brought into use, even when to their own advantage, keeping in old ruts for no better reason than that their forefathers went in them.

Not a word too much could ever be said for the intelligence and common-sense of elephants. To some folks all

animals are dear; to us they were most surely so without exception, but very specially so were the elephants with whom we had so much to do. Without speech themselves, yet comprehending every word spoken to them in the vernacular of their native province: Hindustani if they were from Bengal; Cingalese if from Ceylon; Burmese if from Burmah; and so on, according to the part from which they came.

As a general rule the *mahout* will become attached to his charge, and be kind to him as far as his lights lead him.

On one occasion several elephants had been brought to us for temporary stabling, and we were walking about amongst them as they were tethered here and there in our 'compound,'[1] when upon my offering a lettuce to a very tame old fellow he took it from my hand in his trunk, snuffed at it, and then quietly turned it back towards me. My husband told me they did not care for lettuces, and not to tease him. I tried again, nevertheless, and again Rama took the lettuce, returning it ever so gently, but eyeing me the while. I had had my warning, yet foolishly persisted, and, for the third time, held out the lettuce. Again it was accepted, not snuffed at this time, but flung right back in my face! Lucky for me it was only a lettuce. Grand old Rama! He looked so dignified all the time, making me feel very silly; but I never teased him again. We made friends, then and there, with *jaggheri*, which is the native form of sugar, very dark and treacly, and made in the shape of three-inch square, hollow blocks. Elephants are greedy for it, or indeed for anything sweet.

Rama was said to be one hundred and sixty years old. He could make the others mind him, proving conclusively that the human method is not the only means of communication between living creatures.

[1] Grounds surrounding a bungalow, in part uncultivated, and used for the pasturage of horses, bullocks, cows, and other purposes.

The elephants brought into our grounds were bound to be highly trained, or they would have stampeded at the very smell of the horses, or even of the stables, being naturally terrified at them; whereas the horses did not mind or take the least notice of *them*. As it was, it spoke well for their *mahouts* that no accidents ever occurred; all these elephants stood feeding quietly, while the horses grazed beside them.

When we were travelling, if elephants were with us they had to be kept apart, all not being so amenable; and if we came upon the track of wild ones great caution was necessary, as they too would stampede, rushing madly about anywhere, and be upon us overwhelmingly, so much alarmed are these animals at horses or the faintest whiff of them.

While the tame elephants mentioned above were with us the opportunity was taken for clearing the hill upon which our house was perched of the thick scrub growing all over it, dangerously near to the house itself as affording too convenient cover for lurking panthers in wait for the dogs. This scrub consisted entirely of *Lantana* bushes, of which the flowers are most commonly orange, shading into red, but there are also delicate pink and pure white varieties, the scent being exactly like that of the English flowering currant. When I returned to England on a visit a few years after this, it was curious to be shown, in a conservatory and most carefully nurtured and valued, a small plant of this same *Lantana* which we had regarded as a persistent nuisance, flourishing everywhere, for nothing killed it, while it choked everything else. So the elephants were set to grub it up by the roots, and this they did most cleverly and effectually all by themselves. They found out the best way with each bush; the smaller ones they cleared off first, as easily as you would pull up the weeds in a flower-bed; the larger ones, which were very tough, with strong, gnarled branches and most tenacious roots, they also

negotiated without any fuss at all : it was only play to them. Looping the rope, and twisting it round the bush once or twice at the bottom, close to the ground—making it just tight enough to obtain a good hold without fear of snapping off—they would then walk away, sometimes backwards, sometimes forwards, just according to the growth of the roots, the direction of which they seemed able to guess. Effort there was, and pull there was, but none that could be seen. All you saw was the ground giving and cracking as the bush came up, roots and all ; never once did they allow a bit of the plant to break off short, only to grow again, as the men often did.

An interesting and instructive, indeed almost humiliating, thing it is, too, to watch elephants at work in a timber-yard. The way they stack logs, or draw out any particular one indicated without disturbing the stack, letting its place be filled up by surrounding ones, is something to be witnessed, not described. An elephant knows to a nicety the measure of his own strength : what he can and what he cannot do ; it is the height of folly to interfere, or dictate to him, in the arrogance of human wisdom, against his unerring instinct. To watch a tree felled with an elephant's help is enough to make one recognise and respect some unnamed sense in him that men lack. The forest axemen appreciate this to the full.

Rama was the one always chosen for any special task needing great judgment. I often saw him thus engaged when a huge tree had to be felled. On one occasion, I remember, it was of such height and girth that it would have been risky for the men to be anywhere near at the last, in case it should give way too suddenly or lurch over sideways. But it could not fall backwards, so Rama's business was to push it over when the two axemen had hewn deeply enough to make that possible ; and when that moment had come *he* was to be the judge.

A space was first cleared for the giant's fall where nothing could be harmed. Rama was evidently the brain of the three partners, for they consulted him when pretty well through the trunk by stopping and looking at him, which meant that he was to test it to see whether they should go on cutting any longer, and if so, at what point to aim their blows. He knew by trying with his forehead what resisting power was left; how he knew is the marvel, for no one could teach him that, but know he did. It was supremely interesting to watch him stand with his grand head pressed against the trunk, every muscle in his body taut, but only for a few seconds, not to waste his strength; then, if his judgment declined the task, he would step aside for the axemen to put in another ringing stroke or two; and again it was their turn to stand by while partner Rama made another trial. He knew, without having been taught, the old axiom of the weakest point, and brought all his strength to bear upon that. As soon as *he* was satisfied the men were so, nor would they have dared an extra blow. Not having his intuitive knowledge they left it to him, their own safety included. When Rama's instinct told him he could do it he did not move aside, only lifted his head and looked all round, in a way that said plainly enough that the time had come for all to keep clear, that he was now going to pit himself against the tree, and that the tree would have to go. Not till every one was at a safe distance would he begin. Then again lowering his head he pressed and pressed, with forehead and bent knee, while the tree creaked and groaned, and fell over just where it was meant to fall. The three, men and elephant, were trembling, for it had been a task of strength and nerve for all of them. Then the axemen did a pretty thing; they went up to old Rama and downright kissed him, rubbing their faces against his!

After such exhibitions of special skill we used to give a

treat to the men and animals, to each something they liked —tobacco and grog to the former; sweetened rice and lumps of their ever-welcome *jaggheri* to the latter; grog too, for the elephants also relished half a cocoanut-shellful of *arrack*[1] or a tot of toddy! It was by such little kindnesses as this, costing nothing, that my husband was able to get better work out of his people, and consequently out of their charges, than other officers who were without his knack.

That same toddy just mentioned is an intoxicating and very easily procured native drink, being the liquor obtained from the toddy palm. An incision is made at the top of the tall, slender stem below its feathery crown, and an earthenware pot containing a little lime is tied there overnight that the sap may drain into it. You may often see a grove of these palm trees all furnished with their pots. In the early morning, before sunrise—for later the fermentation would be too rapid, and so spoil the toddy—the men climb up by means of big-toe notches, and a rope ring enclosing themselves and the tree trunk so that they may not fall, and bring away the potful of toddy, cleverly balanced on their heads.

Both in the tame and in the wild state elephants are subject to strange attacks of frenzy—a sort of madness for the time being—and while under its influence are dangerous to all with whom they come into contact. This condition is called 'must,' and needs special treatment for its cure. The native method of subduing one thus affected is by semi-starvation, and by ordering other elephants first to help fasten the victim up securely and then to beat him into submission with chains; all of which they can, and do, carry out. The result is that after such an attack and its 'cure' the patient is a mere wreck from blows and want of food—more dead than alive. With rare exceptions Europeans also follow this plan, at any rate by leaving the

[1] A sort of country rum.

matter in native hands, as the least trouble to themselves. My husband's method was very different; better both from the common-sense point of view and that of humanity. When an elephant was reported 'must' he would order him to be fed *well* with plenty of everything that he liked best to eat, such as sugary rice made up into great balls for his better convenience; fruit, and *jaggheri* of course, to any amount—all these things doctored with calming, soporific medicines and herbs. Opium, too, was to be given in measured doses; and he was to be kept in a darkened place, away from exciting scenes, and to have an entire rest from labour. The effects of this treatment would soon be seen, and when all was over our elephant would be himself again, none the worse for it; neither was any one else, as often happens in the case of the more usual brutality cure. The cause of these fits of frenzy is unknown; they are not connected exclusively with mating seasons, and may come on at any time, though at rare intervals: some elephants, again, never have one at all.

These creatures besides being clever are most delightfully artful. One very bright moonlight evening whilst camping on the Brahmagiris, a spur of the Western Ghats, reached from The Wynâd, we were sitting out in the cool after dinner when one of the elephants somehow contrived to unhobble himself, and walked away from his own quarters into ours. We saw him go up to a sleeping native, snuff at his pillow, and then, ever so gently, draw it away with his trunk, edging his own foot the while under the man's head and shoulders that no jerk might be felt. The pillow was a bag of rice, put there for safety against pilferers! Although tied up in a knot the bag was deftly opened and its contents munched up to the last grain, the thief looking watchfully round him the while. We were not likely to disappoint him of his cleverly won feast, as he seemed to know; for, just letting his tiny eyes rest on us unconcernedly for a second or two,

he fell to considering his next move. Drawing a stone towards him with the ever-handy trunk he got it under the empty sack, and worked both together under the man's head; he then stealthily withdrew his own propping foot, and having waited no longer than was necessary to make sure he had left all safe, he moved off. The man never stirred, and no doubt slept till morning, so we did not see his consternation, comical as that must have been. His loss was, of course, made good to him, though we told no tales.

An elephant will never tread on any of the miscellaneous camp belongings lying about; if any are on the path he picks them up or pushes them aside, injuring nothing. One did that while I was riding him, without my noticing, till I saw the sackful of weighty copper pots he had lifted and placed on the bank.

On one occasion we saw a *mahout's* wife convoyed into camp by their elephant, who had her by the hair! He had wound his trunk round it, and was marching her along, not roughly but purposefully. She had been bathing, and he evidently knew where to find her, and did so; it seemed she was wanted for something, or he thought so, but for what I have now forgotten.

A *mahout's* wife will not hesitate to put her sleeping baby into the charge of their elephant, either laying it in the hollow of the curved, expectant trunk as in a cradle, where you may see the mite dandled to and fro evenly and gently, or putting it beside him on the ground, knowing that the child is as safe in that jealous care as with herself for as long as she chooses to be gone.

The trunk is the most exquisitely sensitive part of an elephant's body; a blow on it from a stick in a child's tiny hand will make him squeal with pain, as I saw and heard myself one day when a cunning old fellow, having sniffed them, got nearer and nearer to the hut where rice bags,

jaggheri, and other things were stored. With felonious intent he began feeling round through a gap in the hurdle-like wall when a child within struck the greedy trunk, and it was swiftly drawn back with a cry.

I think it was during the same expedition that one of our elephants paid the camp an afternoon visit on his own account, during working hours too, giving those present at the time something of a fright thereby from the independent air about him. F. was out shooting pigeons, and in any case the occurrence would not have disturbed him. In camp, besides the servants and myself, was a naturalist friend, Mr. W., who was spending his three months' leave with us, sharing our jungle life. About four o'clock everything was quiet, and coffee had just been brought in by the ayah, when I heard Mr. W. calling me, and sent her to inquire the reason. She never got so far as his hut, but came running back immediately to say that one of the elephants was out there, all by himself—no *mahout*! Yes, indeed, there he stood, gazing about him placidly and good-humouredly enough; but there was no telling what he might take it into his head to do on finding himself his own master, which he certainly was for any of us. Our only idea was to keep him thus good-humoured by plying him with food until he should be missed and fetched away, which would surely be before long. The servants brought all they could lay hands on: cocoanuts, cotton-seed (the bullocks' food), *gram* (meant for the horses), rice, sugar, whatever there was. These being put before him he fed himself happily, but it all disappeared so fast that I feared for our resources, and also that he might tire of what we gave him and begin to forage around. We shouldn't have dared to say him nay!

Presently Mr. W. spied half a cocoanut, and without looking first to see whether it were full or empty threw it towards the elephant, who, the instant he saw it was a mere

shell, lost his temper, or seemed to do so, for he trumpeted, and put his foot upon it, crushing it flat; then he alternately lifted and dropped that sledge-hammer foot with a threatening air, as much as to say he had a mind to serve us the same for tricking him with an empty shell! Too late, Mr. W. perceived the effect of his mistake, and looked thoroughly miserable. But how to pacify the elephant was beyond us; he had eaten all that we had at hand to give him, and the servants dared not stir a foot to get more. We were completely at a loss; but help was not far off, for at this critical moment who should appear but the *Doray* himself—never more welcome! Taking in the situation at a glance, he called out something in Hindustani to the elephant, just as one would speak to a reasonable being, and with the same result: the uplifted foot was dropped, and the whole demeanour of the animal changed. Exactly like a defiant child who knows his master when told to behave, he allowed himself to be ordered off to his own part of the camp, where his *mahout's* wife would take charge of him—not a whit afraid of him was she! Before he went, however, F. recommended Mr. W.'s removing the bad impression he had made by an atoning gift. With this object a whole cocoanut was brought and broken in two, then each half was filled with white sugar and handed by Mr. W. to the elephant, who graciously accepted the peace-offering thus proffered, crunching them up slowly and with evident enjoyment. After this there need be no fear of his bearing malice. The memories of elephants are proverbial, and an affront is forgiven only when the *amende honorable* has been made; otherwise things are apt to turn out awkwardly for the offender.

CHAPTER IV

Fishing expedition—Herd of elephants—A 'rogue'—Monkeys

TAME elephants are one thing, wild ones quite another. Once when we were out on a fishing expedition an adventure befell me with the latter which seemed to me at the time enough to upset any one; but that was not the view taken of it by my husband, who thought, and said, that his sport had been spoilt for nothing!

He was fishing for *mahseer*, the Indian salmon, which is of a silvery grey colour, and the flesh white instead of pink. It attains a great size, F.'s patience being rewarded one day by a beauty which, after cleaning, turned the scale at ninety-six pounds! This record specimen was mounted and presented to the Madras Museum. Clearly it was no light thing to interfere with such sport.

The place had been previously baited with boiled rice and various pastes. F. and his people had settled themselves on one bank of the river, meaning to sit there till they should get a bite, no matter how long, time being nothing to fishermen. In perfect silence they watched for a pull on their lines, which were fastened to large wooden reels on spikes stuck into the bank, and furnished with cog-wheels, which would make a clicking sound to let them know (in case they should get drowsy) when anything was nibbling at the bait. Not a word was said; the people knew better than to so much as whisper amongst themselves at these times, though silence is not their strong point; the fish were shy, and must be coaxed; a very little would scare them away.

Fishing never appealed to me, not even at the supreme moment when a prize was landed and lay flapping on the bank; my only feeling was commiseration for the foolish, captured thing! Being thus inappreciative I had been disposed of on the far side of the river (which was too wide to speak across) with my books, a chair, etc., at a spot where the shore was sandy, the more easily to see intruding crocodiles—'*muggers*,' as they are commonly called—though perhaps in fairness the intrusion was mine. It was not long before sounds broke on the quiet from somewhere behind me, getting momentarily louder and nearer; a sort of splashing and squelching, as of something ponderous wading through water. Turning to look, more than half afraid, I saw a herd of wild elephants coming my way to investigate *me*, as I supposed at the time, though I afterwards learned that that would be the last idea to enter their heads, so timid are they. They had calves with them, and a young tusker, who squealed and trumpeted as he headed his herd. They had all been wading in a creek, but wanted to disport themselves in the deeper water.

Wild elephants, as a rule, keep steadily on their way, bound either for the river, to bathe as now, or for some prime feeding-ground, always avoiding the vicinity of man; nor are they in the least to be feared. That I knew, but having their calves with them I thought might make a difference in their tempers, so I tried by signs to make the fishermen bring the raft across. To scream would be useless; I had been placed with that intention—that not a sound from my side could travel to theirs—but they could not pretend not to see my signals. It was quite a long time, however, before the raft came alongside, and by then the herd was pounding and splashing back at top speed, the little ones being hurried along in front of their mothers and relatives, all of them intent only on taking their youngsters and themselves off in safety. As is

invariably the case, they had been alarmed directly they discovered the proximity of a human being, and came not a step nearer; I need never have disturbed myself for them. Then as soon as we were within speaking distance a voice shouted across, 'You 've driven all the fish away!' And they rafted me back, only that I might no longer have the chance of spoiling sport by taking fright at 'nothings.'

Of course I knew in calm, reasoning moments that if there had been any danger I should not have been abandoned to it; but the mere idea of any one being alarmed at the approach of wild elephants was treated as ridiculous. 'Unless indeed,' said F., 'there had been any likelihood of a "rogue" about here, and then we shouldn't have been calmly fishing!'

I soon mastered the theories of animal habits and jungle-lore generally, but at first very little was needed to frighten them out of my head. In later times I took elephants and other wild things as unconcernedly as did my husband, familiarity having, in a sense, bred contempt, so often, nay always, was it proved to me that, whether ferocious or mild by nature, *all* are shy of man, and anxious to keep out of his way, for their own sakes. This would never have come about, however, without confidence in my husband and his woodman's craft generally, which was trained to a pitch of keenness approaching that of the jungle things themselves, whose senses—sight, hearing, scent—all exceed those of human beings. I have seen him halt suddenly, at the same instant as his men, and noticed an alert, concentrated look flash over every face; then all would drop, ear to earth, listening—for what? They had heard, or sensed, the trampling of a herd of bison or of elephants, and could best locate the sound thus in order to alter or regulate our movements accordingly, so that, supposing us to be in quest of game, we might not be surprised ourselves.

Elephants, as already stated, are not game to be shot indiscriminately by any and every one; their destruction is prohibited under heavy penalties in order to prevent excessive slaughter. A permit, as it is called, has to be obtained from the Collector of the district, and would always be granted in the case of a 'rogue,' or solitary male elephant, so-called because, for reasons known only amongst themselves, and very mysterious to mere human beings, the herd to which he belonged have driven him out, thereby rendering such an ostracised animal morose, and dangerous to people whose business takes them anywhere near his haunts. None but a trained man would dare to attempt the stalking and shooting of a 'rogue,' though, however savage he might have become, he would never lose sight of his own safety, and would be wary of the unfamiliar.

Very greatly astonished was I one morning when F. came breathless into camp, his people at his heels, and asked for 'the biggest sheet as quickly as possible.' If I wondered what for, I saw that the question would have to keep; however, before they went, he found time to tell me that it was to fasten across the path of a 'rogue' elephant, who was at that moment travelling in our direction. The single footprints showed what he was, and were fortunately discovered in time to take precautions against a surprise visit; for we were exactly in his line of route, and unless turned aside he would certainly have demolished us. Such an elephant is mostly in a savage, destructive temper, and if one be not prepared with a permit to shoot at sight —which F. was not—the only thing to do is to get out of his way with all speed, leaving such bars to his progress as may be available in a hurry; in this instance, F.'s idea of the sheet. It was tied by the four corners to branches, and several large empty kerosene-oil drums, with stones for clappers, were hung up by way of bells. These things being curiosities to him, even if not alarming enough to

turn his course, would serve to give him pause, so gaining us a little start of him, which was all we could hope for. In a wonderfully short time we had packed up and were off, nothing hindering.

Our camp at this place consisted of stoutly constructed huts of bamboo and logs, knit together with tough bark and fibre: these were intended to last from year to year, and were wind and weather, though not 'rogue,' proof. The locality had been chosen with an eye to its advantages: water at hand in a mountain spring; cover for game; the approach an easy ascent for supply coolies or pack-ponies—this place combined them all, and had been a regular camp for a year or two previously, thus it was particularly convenient. There were two or three huts, as ship-shape and compact as cabins, for ourselves; a guest-chamber for the chance visitor or friend who might be with us; a store-room; servants' and kitchen quarters; and very strong, panther-proof enclosures for the horses and dogs, the latter having a raised platform, thickly covered with leaves and grass, for their bed; there was even a flower-garden, through which a rivulet had been turned, and in bloom there at the time were balsams, which I most especially remember—scarlet, mauve, and white.

A letter was despatched without delay to our Collector with a request for the needed permit, F. meanwhile settling me temporarily at a safe distance away. The following day he returned to the camp—or rather the site of it only, as it proved—for not a thing was left standing! The sheet and jangling drums had had their effect, but though the latter were all wrenched down the sheet was absolutely untouched; evidently the 'rogue' had been too much frightened at that to go near it, for his foot-prints stopped some yards off and then turned aside. Otherwise the wreck was complete; every hut was down,

and our beautiful little garden a trampled waste. We not being there—though with his keen sense of smell he must have been aware of our very recent presence—he vented his rage on all he found, levelling everything, furious at being delayed in his excursion to the low country, and the feast of growing crops and wild plantains he had promised himself there. Trees were uprooted, branches were torn down and thrown about, and the ground looked as if it had been ploughed up—all showing how much would have now been left of *us* but for the quick eye that noticed the destroyer's tracks. No one was safe with him about, for he could go just where he liked; very fast, moreover; and he was in an even worse frame of mind than 'rogues' usually are. He would ravage the fields below unchecked—for who dare hinder him?—and the villages would be deserted at the first suspicion of his proximity. But his career was to be over now, and no one could regret it.

After the 'rogue' was shot, falling to the first bullet put through his brain, F. told me that the Mussulman peon, who was standing beside him when he fired, immediately walked up to the elephant and touched an eyeball with his finger—a conclusive test of death, or at least of insensibility, but it was a daring thing to do. The peon scorned the idea of danger when I spoke to him of it, in wonder, saying that he 'knew the elephant had gone to *Jehannum*' [hell], so what was there to fear?' His '*sahib could* not miss.'

This 'rogue' had but one tusk, and that only a stump; it had probably been snapped off in one of a hundred tussles, was yellowed with age, scored all over, and of enormous weight; the other was missing altogether, being clean broken away. The four feet were converted into comfortable footstools, being stuffed, and covered at the top with panther-hide.

An elephant is an easy animal to shoot if the sportsman knows where to aim and can shoot straight; those are the two important things. The brain lies in a cavity behind a very thin honey-combed wall of bone; this penetrated by a bullet means instantaneous death. Men may be aware of this and other facts theoretically, yet get flurried and fail, coming to grief themselves very likely. And it is hard to get up any pity for those whose want of skill causes them to cripple or butcher animals as capable of enjoying life as themselves.

Ardent sportsman as my husband was, yet a devoted lover of all creatures great and small, until I knew his argument in defence of sport it seemed to me impossible to reconcile the two passions in one mind. His view was that a well-aimed bullet was most surely better for an animal than a lingering death by starvation and disease in old age, and being harried in its extremity by others of its kind; for such is the universal practice in nature. A case in point occurred with a tiger he once shot, which was crawling painfully to a stream to drink, and looked to be in the last stage of emaciation when he caught sight of it. In a moment the pitiful life was mercifully and swiftly—almost painlessly—ended. A poor, famished beast it was, and its stomach was found to be quite empty; the fine face was grey with age, and the eyes were blurred; teeth and claws were worn down. The coat, dull and mangy from ill-nourishment and disease, showed wound marks that witnessed to some struggle in which the wretched creature had been worsted. Such a death in life would be inevitable at the finish were wild animals never hunted and shot.

Monkeys, however, are an exception to the unamiable practice mentioned above, for they convey their sick and hurt into safety, tending them in a very touching manner, and uttering cries of distress. Such cries often led F.

to where a tragedy was being played out; he would then give what help was possible—in most cases a merciful shot.

He never shot monkeys for sport—few sportsmen do; monkeys are too human, and their moans are heart-rending when wounded. One morning, riding by the jungle-side, we heard such moans, and looking about came upon a mother monkey shot or shot at by some one, for she had an arrow in her neck, and was mortally hurt, and dying; her baby was hugged close to her in death, and was sucking milk with all its tiny force. I need not say she was put out of pain without delay; we took the baby, handing it over to a *syce's* wife, who nursed it by turns with her own infant, and it throve well. We had that little thing for years; it became a well-known and somewhat dreaded—or shall I say respected—person, for it could be very spiteful, though never was so to its friends and familiars.

Another time it was an even sadder chapter in monkey life that was disclosed to us when we heard piercing Rachel-cries resounding through the jungle, and found a mother monkey crouching over her dead little one, beating her poor hairy breast and dabbing leaves and mud on the little body where an arrow had found its mark. We could do nothing here. There seems little difference between the mother-grief of a monkey and that of a human being, but the monkey not having as yet reached the hope that bears up the other perhaps suffers the more; perhaps she forgets sooner too.—Who knows?

CHAPTER V

Fishing-tour adventure—Temple in the forest—Coffee planter's predicament—Leeches—Ticks—Caterpillars—Green-bugs—Pet shrike—White ants—'Praying' *mantis*.

WANDERING through the primeval forests of Malabar one comes now and again upon vestiges of a culture and worship far older than our own—ruined temples and fallen images of exquisite workmanship and of impressive grandeur even in their decay.

It was during a fishing tour that I once found myself close to a temple, not a ruin this time, however, and again caused a break in the day's sport thereby; my fault, as before, with the difference that my husband recognised danger where I, in my ignorance of the land, never dreamed of there being any. With him was a peon, as keen a fisherman as himself, and they had, as usual, settled down patiently for a longer or shorter wait till the fish should bite.

It was a very pretty spot; grassy glades overarched with plumy, green bamboos enticing one into their shade. Things being very dull according to my idea, I began sauntering about some little distance from the bank so as not to cast a shadow on the water, and presently came upon a small oblong temple, some sixty feet in length and in perfect proportion, raised on a platform, with steps all round the four sides. Had any one been about I should have asked leave (and been refused it, as I afterwards learned) before pushing open one of the heavy doors and entering the building; but no one was about, so I looked

leisurely round. If the outside was beautiful, finer still was it within, and rich with the most exquisite carvings. Garlands of flowers hung everywhere, and ashes were laid on the floor in symmetrical designs; smears there were, too, of what might have been either red paint or blood. In the centre was a space enclosed by openwork, and great doors, within which I supposed the shrine to be. Of course, I touched nothing, taking particular care not to disturb the arrangement of ashes, and came away, having seen no one, and, as it happened, having been seen by none, though I gave not a thought to either point. Little did I guess that it was at the risk of my life that I had ventured so much as to stand near the steps!

Strolling back to the river (neither F. nor the peon turning their heads at my approach), I sat down, mentioning where I had been. Came the low, muttered reply, 'For God's sake, be quiet.' That seemed to me very strong language, with only the chance of a nibble in question; nor was such my husband's habit, but I said no more. Then, on his quietly remarking on the hopelessness of the place for any luck, and that they would move, the things were gathered up, and in the shifting he told me of the enormity I had committed in polluting the sacred temple with my presence—speaking of it aloud, moreover, in the hearing of the peon, a high-caste Hindu, who might know more of English than he pretended to do! He said the best hope lay in the chance of his not having seen or understood anything; that he himself had not noticed my going away, or in which direction I went, so very possibly neither had the peon, both being too intent on their fishing and I being in the habit of wandering about. If he should have done so, however, F. thought he would be able to arrange it, as there was only the one man. Had there been two, each witness of the other, it would have been a different matter; far more difficult, if not impossible, without very

considerable payments for the purification ceremonies in the temple; but, worst of all, had any of the priests or boys employed in the service observed me, money would hardly square it. A few years before this a coffee planter living not far off had come down here for the fishing with his family, and nearly lost one of his children. Some of the party strayed off into this very temple at a time when it was full of people. The priests and worshippers were alike furious at the intrusion and pollution, chasing them out and throwing stones and pieces of wood; one child was within an ace of being stoned to death; they wanted to take his life! It was at great expense, and then only with the utmost difficulty, that the whole party were bought off, the father giving into all present demands and binding himself to further compensation, knowing well that the temple authorities would be upheld in their rights.

The proverb 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread' might have been made for those intruders or for me. As to our affair, the peon either hadn't seen, or didn't want to see, anything, so no one was any the wiser, and we heard no more about it.

Camping in, or even travelling through, the forests is to be avoided in the rainy season, when they are infested with leeches. I did it once, but only that once. As you pass along every leaf and twig is alive and bristling with them in their legions, raising themselves on end and craning out their necks till they seem all neck, being then ravenous and thin. In this condition they are an inch long, no thicker than twine, and dark brown in colour. Wôe to you if you happen to be their first victim! If there be one unguarded breach in your apparel from head to foot they will effect an entrance. Nothing is any protection from them but a veil, kept away from the face by a wide-brimmed 'solar topee' or sun hat, and fastened down closely round your throat with elastic. Your under garments

must be arranged with the same idea; if the smallest crevice exist the leeches will find it out, scent-guided. F. used to wind strong unbleached calico soaked in saltpetre brine (or in tobacco juice, obtained by stooping rank tobacco in boiling water till a very pungent solution resulted) round his legs, encasing them in leathern gaiters to keep the wrappings in place, stitched together though those would be. Once, being surprised without those safeguards, he came back at the end of the day quite exhausted from loss of blood, such toll had the leeches levied. *Six hundred* of them were taken off him, mostly from his legs and feet; but indeed they were everywhere, fixed on tightly—not slim now, but gorged and rotund—only to be shifted by a touch of nicotine, or, what seems rather barbarous, by the warm end of a cheroot.

The danger from leech-bite is due to the frightful irritation that ensues, and the victim's tendency to scratch hastily, which only increases it, when nasty sores are apt to result, depending on the state of his health at the time. To me, however, by far the worst thing about them was their writhing, sinuous motion. Some people have a natural abhorrence of any wormy creature, the very idea of contact sends a shudder through them: it is a purely physical repugnance, and a sensation quite distinct from fear. It is so with me—though I should not hesitate to pick up anything of the sort to put it out of harm's way—therefore in my case the bites were the least part of the trouble.

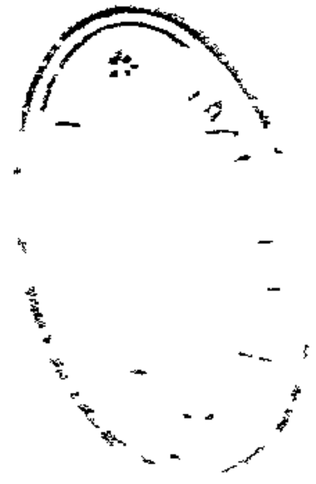
Our huts—we could not carry tents about in the rains—were built out in the open, away from trees and cover, yet they were surrounded and entered by the leeches in spite of the distance they had to come. Thick layers of ashes were scrupulously laid round, and some inches up, the legs of tables, chairs, cots, etc., or no one would have had any peace.

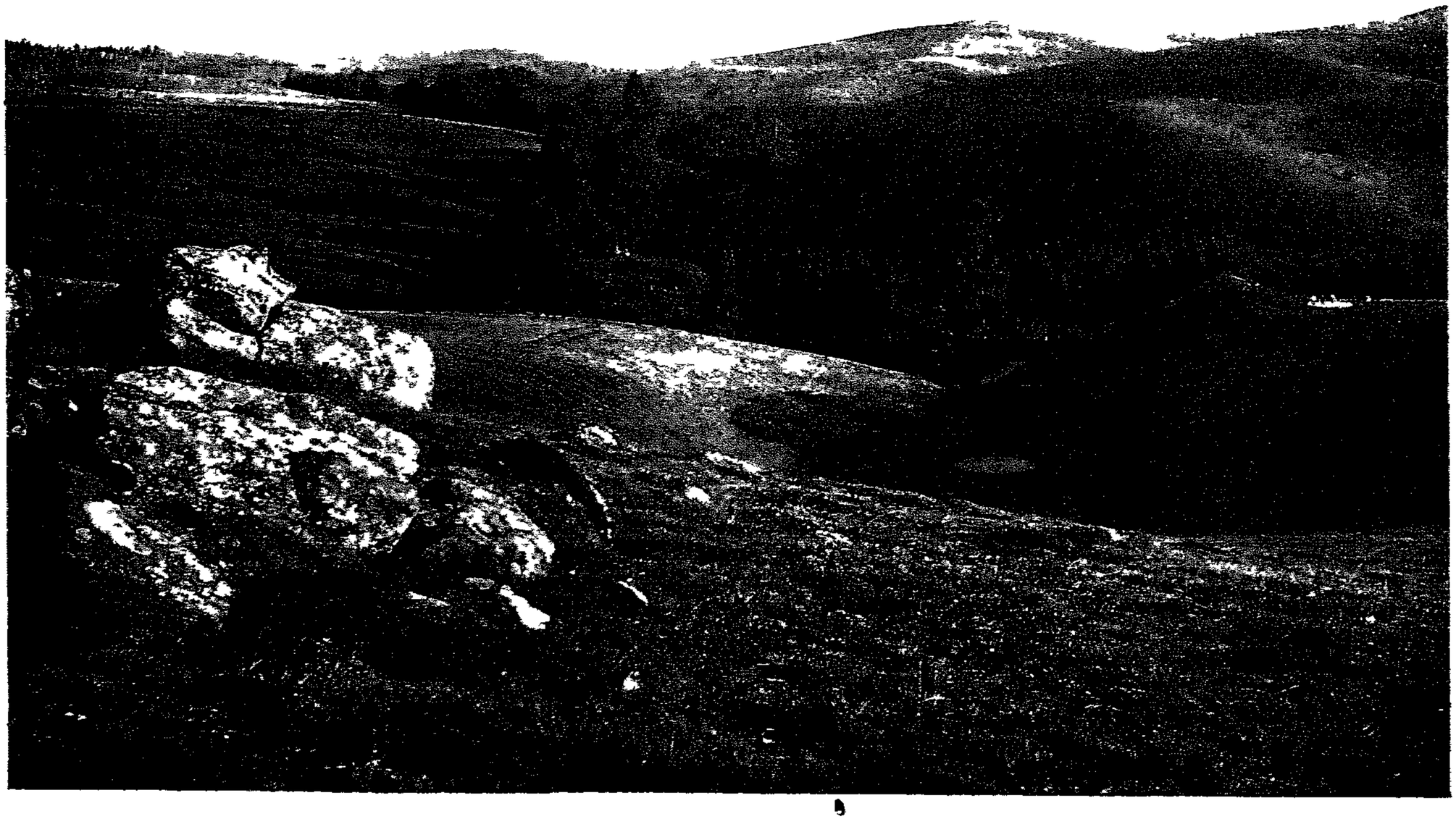
Wild animals suffer cruelly from leeches, and avoid the forests all they can during the months when they abound, keeping to the grasslands in the open, preferring to brave the tempest of cold rain, all unprotected from its driving blasts, rather than be bled to death by these creatures. Natives, too, will go miles out of their way in order to keep clear of the leech-infested areas, which are confined to the wooded tracts.

Though it was an easy matter to take these blood-suckers off the bodies of our horses, dogs, and other animals, it was not so when they got them into their noses whilst drinking —the streams being full of leeches. The poor beasts got no rest for trying to rid themselves of their tormentors. Syringing with salt and water would not always dislodge them, so tenaciously do they stick on; the best plan was to keep the animal from water entirely, by most stringent and hard-hearted watching, until it should be very thirsty; then a pan of water held under the nose would bring down the leeches, thirsty too now, and instinctively seeking their natural element. What leeches do in other seasons I do not know, though there must be moisture enough in mountain streams to keep them alive; at any rate no one ever knew the leech crop to fail.

On this special occasion we lingered in the forest no longer than was absolutely necessary. F. hurried up with his work and returned later on to finish.

Ticks are another and equally distressing source of trouble to the animals and the scantily clothed people. These pests adhere so firmly to the skin that getting them off brings a bit of skin away also. I remember an occasion when one of the dogs, a shaggy one, was in such a state that he had to be clipped, not to say shaved, and rubbed with kerosene before he could be relieved—the oil loosening their hold—and this at the end of a single day's outing! These ticks, small to begin with, get as large and round





THE GOLF LINKS, OOTACAMUND.

as currants with the blood of their victims; the fuller they are the more tightly they stick on. Our people, boaters, coolies—all would be dotted over with them, hanging on in bunches; they had enough to do getting them off themselves and each other, let alone the animals.

Unlike the leeches, dry weather suits ticks as well as wet, so in all seasons there was generally something of the kind to contend with.

However fond people may be of animals, insects, life in every shape—as we certainly were—it does not seem possible for them to look upon ticks and leeches as anything but unmitigated pests; their ways oblige one so to regard them. Existing in myriads, they must constitute a vast aggregate of happiness in the mere joy of living and breathing, which clothes itself in so many forms; but what useful purpose these unpleasant entities fulfil in the scheme of Nature is not apparent on the surface.

There is a certain caterpillar that for its disagreeableness might be classed under the same head as the ticks and leeches; a truly venomous little beast it was—as I can testify from personal experience—not harmless like the 'woollybear' of our June gardens, which it much resembles in appearance. The fine hairs of this caterpillar are poisonous, judging by their power of causing blistering sores if they get into, and work under, the skin. Once there those hairs are too fine to be pulled out, and if they are broken off, with the least mite left behind, it only makes matters worse, so that however much irritation their presence produces, you dare not rub, or you would rub the broken bits farther in.

It happened that F. and I were stopping for the day at an abandoned coffee estate at Billikul, near Ootacamund (commonly called Ooty), where stood a ruinous crib that served us for a *pied-à-terre*. It was morning, and we were

sitting under a shady tree watching for a panther that we knew to be about; we had not been there long, however, before a very awful sensation of crawling, burning, tingling, everything that is dreadful, made us forget all about the panther, and on looking round for the cause of our troubles we found that the tree and the grass beneath it were alive with armies of these hairy caterpillars. There was nothing for it but to go back to the bungalow and take off every thread of clothing, putting it aside to be burnt for fear of any one picking it up unawares, and all that being safely disposed of, try to rid ourselves of the hairs—no easy task. Wherever the caterpillars alight, on your neck or ears, or effect an entry under your clothes, they will crawl unfelt at first, then wind their way into your very innermost apparel, shedding hairs as they go. There is only one remedy, just less unpleasant than the presence of the hairs, and that is to draw them out by dropping hot wax wherever they are upon you, letting it cool, and then cracking it off, when the hairs will come away with it; but it must be very carefully done, and is not an easy job. As can be imagined, our plight was not a pleasant one; we felt as if stung all over as well as slightly burnt, too, with the wax. Moreover, being at that place only for the day, we had no complete change of clothing, and had to send for more by express messenger, on horseback, to Ooty, twelve or fourteen miles away.

Another creature causing some inconvenience, though of a trifling nature compared with that produced by the caterpillar just described, was a persistent little beetle of the lady-bird sort—the green-bug as it is called, though it is without any disagreeable attributes such as its name might imply. So numerous was it in some places that lids of fine basketwork or silver for tumblers and wine-glasses were necessary adjuncts to the table when we were dining out of doors or in camp. The lamplight attracted them in such

numbers that we often had narrow-necked bottles placed about the table into which to drop them; the bottles when full—which they became speedily—were carried to a distance, shaken empty, and brought back to be refilled at least twice during dinner, especially towards the rainy season. At Coimbatore sometimes we could hardly eat our dinner at all, for they flew in our faces and settled on our plates, which could not well be kept covered. They are pretty, pale green things, about one-third of an inch in length and oblong in shape; quite harmless, too, though troublesome from their numbers and persistency. It would seem that they are not good for birds to eat. A shrike we had as a pet once tackled a green-bug, and the next instant he was lying on his back kicking as if in a fit; but he soon recovered, happily for us as well as himself, we being bound up in that shrike because of his perfect tameness. It didn't matter to him whether he were picked up by one foot or one wing, for he would soon right himself, exactly as a kitten does; he had no fear whatever at being thus handled, and was full of play; taking great liberties himself, too, with one's ears or hands, sometimes nipping a minute bit of the skin and twitching it clean out! Yet a coward to boot, for at the first sign of what he considered danger he would be hiding in one's lap or close against one somehow. So perfectly at home with us was he, and also with the servants, that he travelled into camp with us, being as free there as at headquarters, as he could always be whistled back if he strayed farther than usual. Constantly foraging for insects in the earth or the air, he also liked to sample our plates, pecking at anything there that he fancied; if disapproving of what he tasted he would drop it, and shake his head. He acquired odd tastes, too, even to a liking for curry; the rice he came for regularly. Among insects white ants were quite his favourites; they are winged at a certain stage of their

existence, and he would catch them in the air as both he and they were flying.

These white ants—*termites* is their scientific name—will eat up anything; for example, an umbrella left overnight on a window-sill had only a few rags hanging to its ribs by morning. They are clever bridge-builders, too, and have to be reckoned with in Indian household arrangements. A leather trunk of mine, raised from the stone floor on the bottoms of four glass bottles, and quite a foot away from the wall—an outside one certainly, so we ought to have watched better—was forgotten, trusting perhaps to the precautions taken. At any rate no one went to that box for some little time—and quite a little time may be too long to leave things; when some one did at length open it again it was found to be tunnelled through and through by white ants. As its contents—my clothes—were picked up they hung in rags and shreds, just like the umbrella. The box was full, but nothing had escaped the ravages of these marauders, nor was anything in it of the least use again. Wool there was none, all the things being of silk or muslin. Looking round behind the box we found two bridges as thick as a finger, and quite twelve inches long, one at either end, about two inches above the floor, of red white-ant mud. These bridges are breakable but not crumbly, being pretty stiffly compacted of some sort of red clay which the little builders know where to find—never using any other—and are cemented with their own saliva.

Their nests are conical mounds, wonders of engineering within, being chambered and having galleries. Very ordinary-sized nests are six and seven feet high; the smaller ones are used as ovens by native travellers. Large crops of minute mushrooms are often found growing all over these mounds, and can be sliced off like mustard and cress, being just about as high; their tiny white tops are not

half an inch across, so that it takes quite a quantity to make a dishful; they are very tasty when stewed, and perfectly wholesome.

The white ants themselves, at their winged stage, are caught and fried as a great delicacy. Packets of these have often been brought to us as gifts, and, being eminently 'perishable,'[1] might be accepted. I had curiosity enough to taste them, and found that they had been daintily cooked in some aromatic oil flavoured with coriander.

If some few little animals and insects oblige me to call them 'pests,' others can only be regarded as 'jokes'; of such are all the *mantis*, or *amantis* tribe, for they take the strangest forms, or rather, I should say, they are the exact likenesses of simple inanimate things. An end of straw seven or eight inches long, in no way differing in appearance from any other straw, will stalk off on very long, spindly legs, when you will see that it has good powers of locomotion, and a head furnished with serviceable eyes with which to see where it is going, but only a piece of straw for a body.

So, too, you may notice a pea-shell lying on the ground, rather mysteriously if there are not any peas about just then; but that it is one you make no doubt, and so absolutely indistinguishable is it from any other pea-shell that you can hardly believe your own eyes when you see it get up on thin, stiff legs and walk away. Even when you take these things in your hand to examine them closely, the illusion, far from being dispelled, is only the more mystifying.

The 'praying' *mantis* is a strange, twig-like creature, with a habit of sitting up and so folding its limbs that no better name for it could have been found.

All the *mantis* kind (leaf-insects) are quite harmless, nor

[1] Government makes this distinction as to gifts that may be accepted by its servants.

are they particularly destructive to vegetation, though belonging to the grasshopper family—the order *Orthoptera*. My husband sent home a large collection of these leaf-insects to the Zoological Gardens, and being just as curious dried as when alive, they did not lose so much as do specimens depending on colour in interest.

CHAPTER VI

Snakes, harmless and otherwise—Snakestone—Snake at dinner-party—Snake-charmer—Poison fangs—A cobra—Government and cobra-culture—Sacred cobras of Calicut—Nondescript temple—Tanks and 'holy' water.

WHILE making one's way through the forest undergrowth in dry, warm weather it is necessary to be ever on one's guard against snakes; cold and wet they do not like, keeping hidden and sheltered when the leech season is at its height, though in the plains they do seek cool, damp nooks during the hot months.

One curious point about snakes is their peculiar and distinctive odour, which is so like that of wet earth that at the beginning of the rains, if this smell be perceived in the air, one may well be in doubt as to its cause; but in the hot weather, when no moisture is possible, and this scent be noticed, one may be sure there is a snake near by. That is the only indication of their presence unshared by other voiceless creatures, such as lizards, innocently rustling in and out under one's feet.

Figures are said not to lie, but statistics undoubtedly do, and very especially those relating to the various causes of death throughout some given localities as recorded weekly in the Indian papers—English and native. The item 'death from snake-bite' is never missing, and is a handy way of pigeon-holing deaths that are unaccounted for; one, too, which cannot be gainsaid, the true cause in many cases being much likelier private squabbles ending in undiscovered murder—that is, when natives are concerned; in the case of Europeans no such hiding-up would be possible.

In all the years I spent in India never to my remembrance did I hear of an authenticated case of death from snake-bite amongst Europeans. Escapes—'near shaves' as one likes to think them—most people have; but the truth is that every creature will try to make good its own escape as its first aim and instinct, so that after all the danger has never been so great as one imagined. Nevertheless, the snakes of India cannot be disposed of so shortly as are those of Ireland by the writer of a book on that country in his famous chapter headed, 'On the Snakes of Ireland,' the beginning and end of which is, 'There are no snakes in Ireland'!

Snakes there certainly are in India, the most deadly of all being one of the smallest, the *Tic polonga*; it is but some eighteen inches long; a bite from it means death in twenty minutes. If a person be bitten by what he takes to be one of these snakes and live, he may know for certain that it was no *Tic polonga*. With other snakes, to cut the bite out is the best thing to do, though a man by himself may not be able to manage this promptly enough to be of any use before the venom shall have travelled along his veins, and he be doomed. Cautery with a hot iron is, of course, equally good, only the knife is generally handier. Ammonia injected into the wound is useful, and sub-cutaneous injections of strychnine or of a solution of chloride of gold. Both these have proved efficacious as antidotes, though in the case of cobra-bite I would trust to nothing but the direct cautery or a sharp blade. I have been told that (when no prompt action is taken) a lethargy steals over the system, ending in the death swoon. As to the sensations of a person bitten by a *Tic polonga*, none ever survived long enough to tell, and speculation is useless.

There are enormous snakes, of several varieties, which are harmless, though looking formidable enough from their size, notably rock-snakes. Only by their breathing can they be distinguished, when still, from the stone or grass

whereon they may be lying, so wondrously coloured are they—grey blotched here and there with green and brown, exactly like moss or lichen; hence their safety. I remember a friend of ours having the skin of one dried to make chair covers for his English drawing-room! This was over nineteen feet long, and not reckoned out of the way. Beautiful, I own, but not to my fancy for daily use.

Pythons need to be large, considering the size of their prey. F. shot one of these which was very nearly dead when he came upon it. The horns of a deer were sticking out of its mouth, the rest of the body having been swallowed and partially digested without the bones being at all crushed; but the horns gave the snake trouble, and it was choking, so that to shoot it was merciful. Another time he found a cat—a black cat—in the stomach of a python; neither in this case were any bones broken, the prey being always swallowed whole. Whether a python would attack a human being I do not know; I never heard of such a thing happening.

Other non-venomous sorts, such as the common rat-snakes, grow pretty long; they never interfere with people, and their bite would only be in self-defence if roughly handled.

Once we were living temporarily in the more habitable part of a ruinous old bungalow whilst a new one was building for us, and it happened that some friends passing through the place, and staying with us, were obliged to occupy the other part. During the night they were kept awake by strange sounds proceeding from under the warped, creaking floor—an incessant scuffling and squeaking—and on investigation being made the next morning no less than four and twenty rat-snakes, dead and alive, were counted! All the latter were spared, thanks to their usefulness in keeping down the army of rats that infested the bungalow. Some glided away, some stayed coiled up

where they were; the rats had got the better of a few, attacking them and biting them through the neck and vertebræ.

Some of the small harmless snakes are most lovely to behold. Three kinds I remember especially: one was rainbow-hued, or mother-of-pearl, with shaded bars, an exquisitely iridescent little being; another was of a gleaming jet-black above, below, crimson merging into coral and pure white. This sort I saw one day when, just as I was going to sit down on a couch, F. cried out hastily, 'Mind! don't sit on my coat,' his coat happening to lie there. 'Why, is there a snake in the pocket?' I asked. 'Yes, and you might kill it.' That was not exactly the sense in which I had spoken, so kept clear of the coat, not, however, being much surprised.

The third was a little green beauty, living mostly in trees, a transparent, apple-tinted, timid creature, and quite harmless. We had at one time a small Ceara-rubber plantation of our own, and often have I seen this little green snake, no more than twelve inches long, gliding in and out among the leaves, or, as it were, *sailing* towards one—so graceful is the poise of the slender, swan-like head and throat—then darting away in alarm, though no one ever harmed it.

Many a time, when pulling off dead bits among the ferns in the verandahs, have I seen and felt a little snake wriggle from between my fingers—no fern spray, but a living, frightened thing, harmless for the most part; or pushed aside one on the matting in the house, taking it to be a piece of rope, till it twisted round my foot for an instant and then was gone.

Long after I left India—so strong becomes the habit of years—I never moved out of doors at dusk without tapping the ground with foot or umbrella in place of the little cane one uses there when walking in the compound, just to warn

off sleeping snakes, who, glad to be so warned for their own sakes, glide away speedily, and would bite only in self-defence if unable to escape. I well remember one day standing in an agony of terror and indecision as to what to do, having inadvertently trodden on one asleep on the gravelled path. The tiny head was reared three or four inches above my instep, where it could have bitten me, doubtless, but it was only hissing viciously at me for pressing it on to the rough ground, as I was doing for lack of common-sense. My husband coming in sight I beckoned to him, pointing downwards, not daring to speak aloud, hardly to breathe. He saw, and asked me quite calmly why didn't I let it go. Let it go! I wanted nothing better; and it seemed that was all the little snake wanted either, for with the slightest lift of my imprisoning foot it was gone like a streak of light, as pleased as I was to see it go.

People who would consider themselves well educated are still to be found speaking and writing of a snake 'darting out its venomed sting,' such a 'sting' being nothing more than its tongue! The virus of a snake lies in the glands, or poison-bags, beneath two fangs in the upper jaw; with the pressure exerted in biting it is propelled along the minute tube running up in each tooth. Minute as this tube is—like a mere thread—enough poison is injected at one bite to cause death to ensue within a few hours, or in some cases sooner, as I have already mentioned. If the bitten person feel no ill effects, as does sometimes happen, even in the case of cobra-bite, it is only because the venom has spent itself, probably on the clothing, before reaching the flesh. That is just what befell a relative of ours. He was riding, and perhaps his horse trod on the cobra, for it did what was quite extraordinary, it leaped up and struck his boot, biting through the tough leather. There was a tiny wound on his foot, which was cauterised

as a precaution; but no harm came of the bite: the boot had saved him.

The study of snake poison has a fascination of its own for some persons. I have seen this poison, which is almost colourless and limpid, like vaccine lymph. It was shown to us in his laboratory by one of the greatest authorities on the subject then living[1]; one, too, who had an unrivalled name for courage in the field of experimentation with poisons of all kinds—animal, vegetable, or mineral. He told us that even cobra-venom may be swallowed without any ill effects whatever; for it is deadly only when mingled with the blood, as it would be should there be the very least abrasion of the mouth, just as in the case of an actual bite by the living creature. And this may be trusted as correct, for he was one of those persons who, fearless for themselves, are careful never to hazard statements relating to such meddlings with poisons before having tried experiments on themselves; nor was he a vivisectionist, holding experiments performed upon an animal to be inconclusive as to their effect in the case of a human being.

He gave us a small snakestone, said to have the property, when laid upon a bite, of absorbing the virus. This stone has a peculiarly, almost greasily, smooth surface, and is curiously snaky in colour, being black, veined with olive and grey: the larger the stone the more valuable it is. Our friend said that he had not fully made trial of its efficacy, but was inclined to place its reputation with that of the divination of the presence of water and metals by means of a rod or hazel wand; to his mind, the power in both cases lying in the hand using it.

But every one does not possess a snakestone, so the next best thing is to cut the bitten flesh with a bold hand, and then suck at the wound in order to draw out any remaining poison. I saw this done once when one of the

[1] Dr. Shortt, whose laboratory at that time was in the Shevaroy Hills.

peons had been bitten by some sort of snake. He did not see the creature, only feeling the bite, and came running up, his hand held out and downwards, gasping hoarsely, '*Samp! Samp!*' ('Snake! Snake!'). He knew what should be done, the sooner the better. Without wincing, except for a flicker of the eyelids, he bore the sharp, scooping turn of F.'s pocket-knife, and in all appearance gladly; then F., putting his own mouth to the wound, drew at it long and hard. This was done several times, and afterwards the hand was bathed and bandaged in carbolised lint, my husband using some disinfectant for his own mouth. Had there been the least scratch on it he said the peon would have been obliged to suck the wound for himself, and if he did not dare do it either, for the same reason, then some one else must have done him the service, and it would have devolved upon *me* as the person nearest at the time. I remember wondering to myself whether—— But at any rate, after witnessing the calm pluck exhibited by both men equally in those few moments, I felt that I should be ready, if need were, *another* time.

Three tiny marks set in a triangle thus, ∴, are a snake's sign-manual, as it were; they are bluish, or appear so in the brown skin of a native, where only have I seen them.

A friend of ours once, whilst out shooting alone, found himself bitten on the thumb. He saw the snake, and knew it to be a bad one, but there was no time to kill it, for he had to see to himself. Putting his thumb into position on a tree stump he blew it clean off with his Express, and so saved his life.

Another incident connected with a snake occurred at a dinner-party. One of the guests noticed something under the chair of his neighbour, Major C. First saying to him very quietly, 'Don't stir,' he bade a servant bring a saucer of milk, which the man did, guessing at once for what it was wanted. Major C. kept still unquestioningly;

he knew, as did all present, why the milk had been sent for and placed under his chair. Whilst the 'something'—which proved to be a cobra—was engaged lapping the milk it was quickly despatched with a hammer. The next morning Major C.'s hair showed streaks of grey, such had been the strain and tension of racked nerves during that brief interval, though he was no coward, and wears the V.C. to-day.

One morning a hue and cry was raised in our compound on the announcement that a cobra had been seen in the stables, and would certainly do for somebody, and for the horses too, if not routed out. 'Would the *Dursani* wish a snake-charmer to be sent for?' 'Yes, indeed the *Dursani* would, and that instantly, but she must be there to see the charming.' So the man was fetched, no Indian village being without its snake-charmer. I went down to the stables and waited for the great man. No one else could entice the cobra, which had been so fortunately discovered by a grass-cutter, out of its hiding-place. As soon as he came he sat down on his heels and began his weird chant, a musical though monotonous one, drumming the while, without a moment's cessation, on a hollowed gourd with a bladder stretched across each end.

A snake's love for music is no fable; this one emerged from its retreat in a very short time, gliding downwards from the rafters. About four feet six inches long it was, full grown, and undeniably very handsome. On reaching the ground nearer and nearer it came in search of the sounds it loved, heeding nothing else till quite close to the charmer, who was motionless, all but his mouth and drumming fingers. There it rested, coiled round on its tail, with the evilly beautiful head reared quite a foot from the ground; then it began a swaying, dancing movement, head and neck keeping time (as it truly seemed) with the music. It was ecstatically happy, for the eyes, though

mere slits of green light, were dreamy, and the hood lay level. I could not take my eyes from the sight, and to this day I never hear those verses in the 58th Psalm, which speak of the deaf adder 'which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely,' but that scene rises up before me. The East knows no change, and as snake-charmers are to-day, with their fascinating and weird chants, so must they have been those long-dead centuries ago.

Without for an instant stopping his drumming, the man asked for milk in the same monotone as he used in his chant. It was brought, and put down in front of the cobra; that was not done by any of our servants, however, but by the young boy attendant of the charmer in waiting to carry away the show 'properties,' who squatted fearlessly alongside as the snake lowered its head to the saucer and drank greedily. All the time the droning chant, never varying by a semitone, and the hollow, resonant drumming too, went on till the milk was nearly but not quite lapped up, still engaging the attention of the cobra; then—I hardly saw, so swift was he—the man had the creature by the tail end in one hand, not by the head as you would imagine—and lightning-quick swept his other hand along its body, deftly catching it by the throat. For one instant it dangled, impotent now, in the grip of the long lean fingers; the next the man had hooked out the two poison fangs with a clumsy knife which had lain close to hand.

I was horrified at such rough surgery, the bleeding mouth, and the helplessness of the creature hanging limply enough now—after we had fed it, too, for this very purpose, doubtless; but no sentient thing should be so maltreated and cast aside to suffer, cobra or what not; being now disarmed, the victim claimed our pity.

'Sentiment!' some one sneers; others, again, will

understand it all depends on natural character and cannot be altered or brought about. In order to possess that sense of fair play and the right of other creatures to live and enjoy, one must be born with it.

So the man—maybe to his surprise—was made to bathe the cobra's wounded mouth, and it was then supplied with eggs and milk galore: four eggs, I remember, it sucked out in the neatest manner possible. After its meal the invalid seemed quite comfortable, showing no resentment, only drowsiness; for it coiled itself round contentedly in the hay-lined basket brought for that purpose, and was then taken away, perhaps to earn its living for the future as part of a juggler's stock-in-trade, or, what was more likely, to be retained by the snake-charmer himself. In the latter case it might probably prove a valuable asset, and bring its owner in many a rupee when it should be slipped adroitly into some house or stable to figure as a venomous snake, though it was tamed now and quite harmless. There would be no fear of losing it, for it could always be charmed back again. This little *ruse* had, indeed, been hinted at as possible when I was first told of the cobra's presence; but it seemed better to let oneself be tricked with a domesticated specimen than to run any risks by trying to be particularly clever.

A hunt for the cobra's mate was kept up for the next few days, as these snakes are said to be always found in pairs and to revenge themselves for any injuries to each other. But on this occasion no other was discovered.

So much did the two poison fangs interest me that I asked to have them (imagining them to be as innocuous now as their late owner), and kept them very carefully on a card, where they stuck and dried. Afterwards, when my husband was shown my treasures, he took them away and burnt them instantly, telling me that I had been handling death itself. For those tiny things, not so much

as a quarter of an inch in length, and shaped like a dog's tooth, still contained the fatal venom, as might be seen in the darkly-tinged and thread-like tubes passing up their centre, which tubes, if empty, would have been transparent; there was, in fact, enough venom in them, if moistened, to kill any one touching them with the least abrasion on their fingers. I hadn't particularly heeded mine, and pretty often for a fortnight had been picking up the mysterious little scraps of things to gaze at them under a strong magnifier—attached to their card certainly, but that was only for fear of losing them—so great was the fascination they had for me, and very thankful I was to reflect that at any rate no one else had had access to them.

If you should by ill-chance find yourself in the near neighbourhood of a cobra, the best thing next to getting away is to keep perfectly quiet. If you remember this, and have yourself well in hand, you are probably safe, as long, that is, as the dreaded hood—its danger signal, only raised in anger or excitement—lies level. I once found myself in such a position. What it would be to see the fateful hood raised at oneself I do not know; to find oneself near a cobra at all is bad enough almost to stop one's heart beating for horror, while passively, as it were, waiting on the creature's whim. Those who have experienced such moments will tell you that to be face to face with a cobra carries with it an indescribable sensation of chill. The metallic-looking body, the flat head, and narrow, glinting eyes strike one through and through with a mortal cold. Very gems for beauty are those emerald-gleaming eyes, but of a sort likely to be better appreciated at your leisure with a sheet of glass betwixt you and them.

One morning when luxuriating on the verandah—Indian fashion in a reposeful chair, with my foot tucked up—I noticed a black Persian cat (never very far off, and now stretched out on one of the long arms of my chair)

gazing downwards very fixedly ; he was gritting his teeth and making those little sounds cats do at a bird which they have marked as their own, thinking it to be within their spring. Following his line of sight I saw a cobra coiled round the front leg of the chair. It was also regarding me ; its head—the never-to-be-mistaken spectacled head —was a little uplifted, but not the hood. That gave me courage and time. I dared not stir or call out for help for fear of alarming or annoying my unwelcome visitor. Nothing must excite it—that had always been impressed on me with regard to a cobra.

Now cats are not a scrap afraid of snakes, and my terror was lest 'Chummy' should make no more ado but pounce down upon this one !

How to bring my feet to the ground so as to get away without upsetting its temper I knew not ; but something had to be done, and that quickly. Cobras are known to be short-tempered ; as long as its hood lay flat all was well, it was still in a good humour, but a change of position on the cat's part or mine might be fatal.

The mind moves quickly at times ; in those few seconds it had occurred to me that possibly what I was dreading, namely, the rustling of my skirts near the cobra if I stirred, might in reality be the very thing that had fanned it into placid drowsiness with their softness ; hence by a little management of those skirts, quiet, slow movements might serve me better than anything else.

But 'Chummy' could not be trusted to keep still and watchful, as I could trust myself to do ; he must be made sure of, so with him clutched firmly under my arm, and a very fervent prayer for outward calm, wherein only lay safety, I did put my feet to the ground within an inch or two of the cobra, nothing but a scrap of muslin between us. I then stood up and stepped past it without rousing it at all ; indeed it had drawn its raised head back among

the coiled folds, and seemed to be settling down to sleep again. All was over and done quickly enough, as we reckon time; but truly those few seconds were the longest in my life, and stand out distinct from every other memory.

I do not think now that there was any real danger whatever from that cobra in its contented, slumberous mood; if it had fancied that its safety was in any way threatened it would have become enraged, but its behaviour expressed neither fear nor irritation. The question was how long would that amiable frame of mind last. The creature's suspicions once aroused, nothing could have saved the situation.

But now another difficulty arose. How could the cobra be persuaded to leave the premises amicably? None of our servants would harm, let alone kill, it on any account. We were then living at Calicut, where the people venerate cobras, believing them to be inhabited by the souls of their ancestors; therefore, as religion was concerned, no one could be either ordered or bribed to despatch one. Finally, however, this one was driven away by the very simple device of tilting up the chair with a long bamboo cane. Our Hindu servants were on tour with the *Doray*, or it would never have been allowed to escape scot-free.

Whilst we were still living in that same place a friend came to spend the day with me—a very favourite way of enjoying each other's society with Englishwomen in India. She brought with her her two children and an ayah for each of them.

My friend and I were 'lazing' by ourselves when frightened cries reached us. On our going—or more probably sending, it being India and the hot weather—to see what was the matter, we found that one of the babies had been playing by a hole in a wall, pulling out the crumbling *chunam* (mortar), and trying, baby fashion, to make the hole larger. The hole was tenanted, and the child

had roused the sleeping Death within. The ayahs, who knew a cobra when they saw it, said that it had put out its head *with the hood erect*, as was only to be expected when it was disturbed by the prying, baby fingers. Our respective husbands, having been told, were soon on the spot. Mine, never at a loss, had milk, a forked stick, and a good knife somewhere at hand, I knew; the saucer of milk was put down by the hole, and we waited—not long, however—for milk and eggs will entice any snake, and it did this one, which showed enough of itself for its head to be pinned down and chopped clean off.

Snakes were far too numerous at Calicut for our peace of mind, but especially cobras, protected as they were by native superstition and custom, and these, I need hardly say, were the kind that mattered to us most.

At one time a reward was offered by the Indian Government for every cobra's head or venomous snake brought in to the *Kutcheri* (Government Office) at every station or cantonment throughout all districts generally, which most short-sighted policy only augmented the supply a hundred-fold, for the people took to breeding them, as they did in the case of crocodiles when crocodile eggs were paid for. However, rewards were not often offered on the west coast, where our home mostly was, the people's objection to destroying them being, as I have said, a religious matter and not to be bought off by bribes. This principle holds good all over India.

In the native quarter of this town there was a temple, in connection with which was a sacred *tope*, or grove, of the wild fig, the small scarlet berry of which tree, according to a legend many centuries older than Christianity, was the undoing of the mother of all living—Eve, as we Westerns call her.

Round the great trunk of the largest tree in this grove was a wall or terrace, some five feet high, built up of stone

and cement, ages old, and on its wide, smooth surface were always to be seen several cobras, either slumbering or moving drowsily towards the food unfailingly placed there for them by the priests and the worshippers at the shrine.[1] These snakes lived constantly under the shelter of the sacred stately tree, rearing their broods in the recesses of its trunk, and basking in the sun on the terrace prepared for their use. Thus tended they kept to their own home, and were carefully guarded lest harm should befall them at the hands of any one to whom their persons were not so sacred. They were far too well housed and fed to think of being in the least vicious. Perfectly at ease and harming no one, they let themselves be handled freely, or made necklaces of, by those who gave them fresh milk, eggs, cooked rice, and other delicacies. And yet they were not rendered incapable of dealing death had they been so minded, not being deprived of their poison fangs or mutilated in any way; to do that would have been deemed desecration and an evidence of want of faith—a real, working faith that, by the way. Thus was respect for their ancestors shown by the people in caring for them in their present incarnation.

At a place called Capecotes, some distance from Calicut, but also in Malabar, there was, and probably is still, a very extraordinary temple or church of quite a different kind, which strangers are welcome to see.

I believe it was first erected by the early Portuguese settlers of the fifteenth century; but the worship conducted there must have been a very bastard form of Christianity, judging by the appearance of the place. Indeed, on entering it and looking round it was hard to know what manner of church it could be.

The building was of country stone, roofed with tiles;

[1] The cobras themselves were not objects of worship, but venerated as the form in which ancestors were living.

seven bells hung in a row over the door, in front of which stood a pillar made of wirework, nearly as high as a ship's mast, with a weathercock at the top.

Visitors were met by four men—some kind of ministrants or servitors of the temple—scantily attired from the waist to the knees in calico, and having each of them three strings over the right shoulder tied under the left arm.

These men sprinkled the party with water from a fountain, and gave each person powdered sandalwood to strew on his head, making the sign of the cross themselves.

The images inside and painted round the walls had such frightful faces and forms as to suggest anything but saints and angels, so that some devout Portuguese Roman Catholics who were amongst the visitors began to doubt whether it could be a Christian church after all. In the centre was a small chapel, where stood an image which, from the darkness of the place, could be seen but very indistinctly. None but the priest might enter here. He paused before the figure and chanted in quite a fine voice, 'Maria! Maria!' Whereupon some natives who were following behind fell flat on their faces three separate times, and the Portuguese, taking it to be an image of the Virgin, dropped on their knees and prayed.

In Calicut, as in most largish towns, there is a vast tank, with immensely deep, shelving sides, and steps to the water's edge, built of solid masonry, and ancient before history was. At certain times this tank is blessed, and then the people are eager to bathe, and children are dipped in it. It is now 'holy' water, and, though the reverse of pure, is swallowed with a fine faith in its efficacy to cure disease.

Ordinarily the level borders round the tank are crowded with booths, where fruit, toys, sweetmeats, vegetables, etc., are sold; and the people squat about, washing their

clothes or their feet, or using the water for any other purpose that occurs to them—and, of course, drinking it. We lived in that district for several years, but I never heard of the tank in Calicut being empty, so I do not know how it was cleansed.

CHAPTER VII

Calicut—The Zamorin and his palace—The Thears—Domestic scenes—Feeding the babies—Natives callous to animal suffering—The Moplahs—Malabar law—Christian and 'heathen' servants—'Idol worship'—Logan-harri—Missions and missionaries.

CALICUT, whose sacred cobras and strange, composite temple I have described, is one of the most interesting towns in Malabar, owing to its great antiquity.

It gives the name to calico, being the first place whence Europeans got cotton cloth. Here, too, is the favourite residence of the Zamorin (ruler), a native potentate.

The honour of an audience was once accorded to some English and Portuguese gentlemen, who would not be likely to forget the experience, bought, as it was, at too high a cost, to their thinking.

They were conducted by the court officials through lovely shady gardens, with fountains, running rosewater, here and there. Some dozen men preceded them, armed with sticks, to clear the way, for the disorderly mob thronged through with the party in order to catch a sight of the Zamorin. Such was the crush that several were squeezed to death; but, in deference to European notions as to the sacredness of human life, the affair was hushed up at the time, and no fuss that I know of was ever made about it afterwards.

The Zamorin received them very courteously. His dress was simplicity itself, consisting of a white calico jacket, and straightly wound petticoat like that of his subjects, but it was heavy with gold embroidery and sprays and adornments of beaten gold; his fingers and toes blazed with jewels.

The hall contained but little furniture; what there was

was of ivory, cushioned with red silk, and a palanquin lay to hand. This was very gorgeous; all gold and silver and red silk curtains, and having ivory poles tipped with gold elephants.

Images stood about in niches, decked with necklaces of huge sapphires and pearls. Fruit and sherbet were served, and then, after an interchange of compliments through an interpreter, the audience was at an end.

Calicut was a busy trading port long before the great Portuguese admiral, Vasco da Gama, came to an anchor on the coast of Malabar, a few miles from the town, on the 20th of May 1498. He found it full of Moors and Arabs, who were the traders of the then known world; and their descendants have adopted the land as their own, harmonising, but never inter-marrying, with the original inhabitants, who are called Theers. Theans is the proper plural, I believe. These last are a handsome race, with straight hair and pale olive complexions—wonderfully pale for natives of India—and with features so regular as to become almost monotonous, for all look alike. There is not a hooked nose to be seen among them, whereas that is a very usual trait with the Moplahs, who are of Arab extraction. The men are very tall; the women are pretty up to the age of fifteen or so, but they age and fade rapidly, as do all native women; their blue-black shining hair is very loosely gathered into a knot on the top of the head, whence it falls round the ears and neck in a very graceful way, and is secured with long silver, or perhaps only wooden, skewers. They adopt no two ways of dressing their hair, so every woman's head is alike. The men's heads are shaved almost bare.

On this west coast, whilst going about their business out of doors, the people may be seen wearing an ingeniously simple protection from the sun, and rain, too, in its season—a sort of round tray made of palm leaves stitched together,

and fitting the head like our hats, only that the crown is beneath the brim.

Seeing these people for the first time, Europeans are apt to be shocked, for the women wear no clothing above the waist. With their darker skins, however, it is not so conspicuous as it would be otherwise; at any rate one gets used to it, as one does to many another strange sight, unpleasant ones, too, in many cases, among which I may name their habit of attending to their own and their children's hair in public. This they do in the most careful manner, scrutinising every lock, chatting merrily the while, not one whit disgusted, let alone surprised, at their findings; the surprise, indeed, would most surely lie the other way. This is part of the daily toilet, never omitted, and performed in the open at any time as they squat in the street or, in the case of the more select, on their own small verandahs. Children perform these kind offices for each other in the intervals of play or squabbling. Not that these habits are peculiar to Malabar; you may see the same thing going on in every bazaar street all day long all over India.

While speaking thus slightingly of certain native customs, it is but fair to mention others that are more pleasing, such as their scrupulous care of their teeth. The first duty taught to a child is attention to its little mouth and pearly teeth. In that respect at least these primitive people have nothing to learn, and a good deal to teach. The brush used is a far better one than ours, being simply a twig of a certain tree—the *neem* tree.[1] They cut a twig a few inches long, scrape up one end, and as the wood is very fibrous, the brush is ready. These twigs have a refreshingly clean taste, are astringent, and slightly bitter. I have often used them, and preferred them, too, combining as they do—with efficacy and agreeableness—the purposes of both brush and powder.

[1] Or margosa, *Melia Azadirachta*.

You may also see, and will be welcome to watch, purely domestic scenes, such as a man seated in a great tub, knees to chin, while his wife pours potfuls of water over him. And, standing round the oil shops, many a one of those who can afford the luxury—women as well as men, for there is no mock modesty about these people—may be observed oiling themselves in the open street, all happy and contented as the process is being completed and they shine again. That, however, is not their object; they do it to make their skins soft and supple during the hot, dry, windy days, when everything is parched, and so much of the surface of their bodies being exposed to the sun and air, they find themselves more comfortable for this anointing.

Another scene, exclusively of the nursery, is quite ordinary and taken no notice of. A woman will be seen standing about, evidently expecting some one, for she looks up and down the street anxiously as she shades her eyes with her hand. She is a 'coffee-garbler'—one of the hundreds employed in the factories here at sorting over the berries before they are packed for export. It seems she has a tiny infant; she cannot have it with her as she wants her hands for her work, so she leaves it at home in a cloth slung up high to a beam by ropes, out of reach of sniffing dogs. Only two things are in her mind as she stands there: the wailing mite and her inability to get to it except at long intervals; yet it mustn't go hungry. She knows nothing of 'artificial foods,' but she can solve her own problem.

Presently a little girl or boy comes along carrying a tin mug, which is held up steadily for her in two plump hands while she fills it from her breast, not a touch of self-consciousness about her the while as she exchanges chit-chat with her acquaintances passing to and fro. Then she bids the child have a good, refreshing drink before departing (otherwise temptation might prove too strong), gently

tipping up the mug that there may be no stint here either. It is then borne away, ever so carefully. How the milk is administered to the baby at home I don't know—probably with a rag; but there is no doubt of its reaching its ultimate destination safely, if one may judge of the plan by the many fat brown things rolling about the road, seemingly general property, who were all more or less brought up thus.

Other sights objectionable to Europeans, even to those who have no more than a tolerance for animals, but causing grief and pain to those who love them, are only too common in these Indian villages; for though many castes will not take life the people are supremely callous to suffering in animals, and will see existence prolonged under appalling circumstances without a second glance, far less pity, or any thought of affording relief.

A bullock with it back broken lies where it fell, and will continue so to lie till death ends its sufferings, if no European interfere.

A crow plucked of every feather, hanging head downwards, and fluttering and screaming out its tortured life, as a living scarecrow, is an ordinary object on the verandahs of grain and sweetmeat sellers. Europeans soon find that to buy such a victim, in order that it may be put out of pain, is but to create a precedent; so what to do for the real best becomes a question when this sort of thing meets your eye—and you may trust a native to see that it does do so if you are known to object to such practices—to pass on and do nothing being a sheer impossibility. But you may be sure of seeing another miserable bird in the same position next day—a succession of them, indeed, with variations as long as anything can be made by it. Even where an Act exists for the protection of animals, the gift of a cocoanut or its value, a few pice, would settle the matter with the local constable. Much can be, and is, done by European officials, but all depends on their in-

dividual natures and way of looking at things, as natives have a genius for finding out how the wind blows, and trimming their sails accordingly. In places where F. was paramount such sights as those instanced above were not obtruded; and a few other customs, such as the extortion of confessions by torture, which we English, at any rate, have outgrown, were not practised. They were kept in abeyance; to change them was beyond the power of any man.

Another thing of a different kind, horrifying to our eyes, though having a good motive, is to be seen in these bazaars of Malabar amongst the Mahommedan Moplahs, a fine, manly set of people. During certain festivals, or rather on the days of penance therewith connected, or in fulfilment of some vow, they attend to their business as oil, grain, or calico merchants, as the case may be, haggling and jabbering for hours over the value of half a farthing while blood is dropping from, or has dried upon, a gaping wound in the cheek through which a piece of wood has been thrust, kept in the wound too, there being no intention of letting it heal as yet, the men behaving all the time exactly as if the self-inflicted and purely voluntary torture did not exist.

In these shops the merchant sits on his narrow verandah with his wares displayed behind him on shelves, on the floor, or on a tiny stool raised not more than three inches from the ground. He would not hesitate to leave his property unguarded for hours if he had business elsewhere; no one would meddle with anything there. These Moplah merchants will drive a very hard bargain, but they are honourable in business, scrupulously carrying out their part of a contract whether in dealing amongst themselves or with Europeans. F. had many opportunities of observing this in their timber and produce transactions with the Forest Department, and he always spoke of their strict integrity as contrasting favourably with the less rigid honesty

of some European firms; nor was it owing to simplicity: the subtle Eastern intellect would never let itself be over-reached.

Malabar law is said to be one of the most intricate of systems, the law of inheritance being specially strange to our notions; for property passes, not to a man's own children, but to his nephews, his *sister's* children, or to an adopted son. Instead of paper or parchment the leaves of a palm tree are used. On those, title-deeds, memorable events, and so forth, are inscribed with a sharp-pointed pen or instrument, and then the leaves, having been reduced into a regular form—strips some twelve inches long and two inches wide—are tied up between two pieces of polished wood.

No Moplah ever enters European service as a house servant, though other natives of the west coast do—the men, that is, never the women—making the very perfection of servants. They are clean beyond praise; bathing before meals is an integral part of their religion faithfully observed by all, old and young, no matter how occupied or how poor they may be. And here I must admit, without meaning any offence to our many missionary friends, that in my experience (some years ago) Christian servants were at a discount, excepting in mission households. The rest of us made no secret of our preference for the unconverted, whom we found honest and loyal. These people do live up to their beliefs with whatever motive, be it fear, superstition, or what not, and though 'heathen' were far and away above the level of the ordinary native, or 'biscuit' Christian convert. The term 'biscuit,' as thus used, explains itself, implying that a man has become a Christian only for what he can get by it. Such a one, if he thinks he is likely to be engaged, will certainly say when asked of what religion he may be, 'Same like master,' in order to ingratiate himself, having already found out of what 'like'

religion the proposed master is. This may impose upon new-comers to India, perhaps; no one else wants them if they can arrange otherwise. Therefore we always chose good 'heathen' servants. Of all words that word 'heathen' is the most misleading and the most hateful to Anglo-Indian ears.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the idea, even now to a great extent prevalent in England, that natives—I am only concerned with my own familiar India—worship the idols and images in their magnificent temples or wayside shrines. The hideous or grotesque figures to be met with at every turn—for religion and its observances form part of the daily life's routine—are merely emblematic of the attributes of Deity, and are not intended to represent the Deity Himself; not primarily that is, though they have come to do so to the common eye. They are not the 'false gods' one used to hear so much about at missionary meetings, nor are they 'bowed down to' as such; at any rate not by thinking and educated persons. Everywhere are to be found superstitious minds and a crafty priesthood, from the very beginnings of things to now; not in India alone nor in savage lands alone. That they turn religion to their own worldly advantage is an old charge laid at the door of the teachers of creeds, and no truer than other sweeping assertions.

One very hideous image (its name I have forgotten) has the forehead of a man; the trunk of an elephant, eyes set all round the head; a serpent with jewelled eyes, its tail in its mouth, pendent from the neck; innumerable intertwining arms and legs, hands and feet; with other monstrosities of person. The question naturally arises, What does it all mean, as taught by *good* priests, of whom there are surely some? I will endeavour to answer it as explained to me.

The man's forehead is the emblem of reason and judg-

ment, and the single eye in the centre is the. 'Eye of Enlightenment'; the elephant's trunk suggests innate power, the circle of eyes means all-seeing; the serpent signifies eternal, a serpent with its tail in its mouth having been the universal emblem of eternity from the most hoary antiquity in all lands and among all peoples. The 'countless members symbolise the abstract ideas of all-pervading, all-controlling, and all-creating in every place at the same time. What is this but the Jehovah of the Old Testament and our own Christian God—Omniscient, Omnipotent, Immanent—crudely, coarsely, if you like, here symbolised. Truly if one will but look with the understanding, inner eye, God, the One and the Same, is to be discerned in the kernel and marrow of every creed, in every age, and in every consciousness.

Many a lesson have I learnt during talks with my 'heathen' ayahs, from one especially, who was with me for many years, and only left me when I bid my last good-bye to India. Her name—rather a musical one—was Logan-harri; she came to me when she was twenty-five, a grandmother already! On my asking her once why she put flowers and kept a tiny lamp burning in a certain spot—the hollow of a tree in an avenue—she answered me with another question: 'Why does Little Missus put flowers in front of Big Missus' picture always?' which was true of me. By the 'Big Missus' she meant my dear mother in England, while I was the 'Little Missus.' She spoke very pretty, fluent English. I understood her thought, and was answered, also rebuked. 'Only that why, Missus.' And she went on to explain about the lamp, which signified 'a light in a dark place'; thus had she been taught by her priests. I never forgot that short 'heathen' sermon.

One morning I had a visit from a Salvation Army lass. Began she: 'Was' my 'ayah a Christian?' so I sum-

moned Logan-harri to answer for herself. She was equal to it, I knew.

'No, Missie; I heathen.'

'Would you like to be a Christian?'

'Yes, Missie' (ever so humbly), 'if Missie please toll what kind Christian.'

'What *kind* of Christian!' rashly cried the Salvation Army lass. 'Why, to believe in Christ, the Saviour of the world.' And she ran through the heads of our creed quickly, but solemnly and most earnestly, in her anxiety to secure a convert in this inquiring heathen.

'Yes, Missie, I know, but very plenty *kind* Christians. What kind Missie want me to be? There 's *you* Missie kind, the Salvation Army; and my Missus' kind, Prā-testan Church; there 's Roman Catholic, and Presby-trān, and London mission, and German mission. Missie please, which I be?' And she looked up innocently, not without a glint of malice too, into the rather blank face of the lass, who attempted no answer to the pointed question, and said nothing more to the ayah about her conversion. I thought the fact of there being so many different Christian missions as puzzling to the heathen mind as it was true, and it was not altogether pleasant to be so reminded of it.

The most effective Christianising influences at that time in India were undoubtedly those of the missionaries, whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Nonconformist, and of the German or Lutheran missions, on account of the self-denying lives of their respective members. Without exception, amongst the numbers that we knew, each one lived hardly, not to say in penury, whether in their mission quarters, or travelling about the country in a single bullock-cart—jolting, springless; sleeping in or under it; oftentimes with no companion but the driver, faring as he did, though, until acclimatised, tried by the rough life as he would never be; regardless of danger from infection and also from

fanaticism. Being always possessed of some medical skill, these missionaries might expect to be tolerated, if not exactly welcomed, in most places on account of their helpfulness. Doing good wherever possible, even if not converting many, their lives were the best commentary on their teachings.

The Government chaplains, on the contrary, were supposed to make a pretty good thing of it; in no sense was their work a 'mission,' nor did it lead them into the by-ways of hardship and risk. Socially they considered themselves many cuts above their missionary brethren, who devoted themselves entirely to their calling, hardly taking any part in the social life or amusements of a station.

In what I have said I have made a rough generalisation. To my first statement—regarding the missionaries and their devoted lives—we met with no exceptions; to the comparative worldliness of the others, we knew many and grand ones.

CHAPTER VIII

Fighting bears—The hat-trick—Encounters with panthers—Hog deer and leopard-cat kitten.

My ayah, Logan-harri, was with me in many an expedition; she was always confident that where the *Doray* was there was safety, not merely from wild beasts, but from the 'evil eye,' as potent a bit of witchcraft in Eastern as it is in Western lands. The jungles and their denizens had no more terrors for her than for me, and she would not have been scared away, as was that faint-hearted creature of earlier days, when the bear came to investigate our camp; still, neither of us was altogether proof against alarm, and we could run on occasion. Once, indeed, we could hardly do even that for sheer terror. We were strolling about, never far from camp, when such awful sounds issued from a wood, waking the echoes there, as made us look at each other dumb with fright. Whither to run we knew not, for the noise seemed all around, and neither could we climb to any purpose; yet, though we felt it was quite impossible to stop where we were, our feet seemed turned to lead, and she, poor thing! fell down. I was very rough, dragging, and, as I remember, *kicking* her, for her own good, to force her to move. However, we did manage to reach the camp, and on my describing to F. the general awfulness of the sounds he said that he too had heard them, and that they were made by bears fighting in the depths of the wood, very much too busy to think of aught else, so that we had not been in any danger.

Once again the same sort of snarling yells startled us,

but, remembering the explanation given us before, we were not so much perturbed, and guided by the sound of the uproar looked about for its cause. Not far off we soon discovered three bears, two of which were locked in mortal combat, while the third was running round and round them, every now and then raising itself on its hind legs and wringing its fore paws, whimpering and whining, in the deepest distress, without any anger in the tone—the very gestures and manner of one beseeching the combatants to cease their strife, just as a lady of olden time might have prayed two gallants to be reconciled for her sake. But the bears had no idea of such magnanimity; they rolled over and over, never letting go, biting, tearing, hugging savagely enough to crush the breath out of each other, and all the while yelling with fury. The sight and sound were enough to freeze any one's blood, the fight not being a sham or behind iron bars. As there was nowhere to hide we tried to run away, but fell at almost every step as we tore headlong over the tussocky grass and uneven, stony ground, not daring to look behind. Nobody was paying any attention to us—except to laugh!—as we were told by F. when he came in that evening, laughing again at the recollection, which he said was so amusing!

'Yes, I saw you; we all saw you and your ayah trying to break your ankles running away from nothing.' (He called it 'nothing'!) 'Those bears were fighting over a female bear, none of them noticed you, and wouldn't have interfered with you if they had. There was nothing for you to be frightened at.' My private opinion, and Loganharri's too, was that ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have thought there was a good deal more than 'nothing' and have behaved as we did.

'You ought to have been with us,' F. went on; 'it was a grand sight. We saw the scrimmage to the finish. One of them rolled the other over, disabling him for the

time, and walked off with his mate.' It seems the lady bear would always prefer the victor in those combats.

But F. ran away himself once (as I was never tired of reminding him !), and came staggering into camp one evening quite exhausted, saying that he had accidentally disturbed a bear feasting on rock-honey, whereupon the animal had turned angrily and made for him. For once he was not carrying a rifle, not having meant to go far from home, so there was nothing to do but to run for it ; and run he did, and his dog to. He said he was sure there was once or twice no more than a yard or two between the bear and himself, and more than once he felt its hot breath upon him, the bear not being impeded by the rough ground as he was. In the end, when his chance of escape was getting uncomfortably doubtful, an inspiration came to him. Turning quickly, and taking his courage 'in both hands,' he pulled his soft, wide-brimmed felt hat off his own head and put it on the bear's, ramming it well down over the eyes, in the certainty of at least arresting his pursuer and gaining for himself a desperately needed breathing space, as well as a moment's start for yet another race for life, for few animals can cover the ground faster than a bear when put to it. The *ruse* succeeded. Bruin was fairly 'bonneted' and blindfold, standing stock-still for an instant, and then running round and round himself aimlessly, having lost his bearings. But it might be only a short respite ; not even to look at so comical a sight as a bear in a hat could F. afford to linger. He gathered himself together for a final, steady run, and got safely into camp. He did not arrive so soon as the dog, however, who was quite composed by now. F. was done up for the moment, but was presently able to congratulate himself on having thought of the trick. The bear had, doubtless, returned to his interrupted feast after getting rid of the hat by rolling.

I don't think my husband was ever taken unawares ; at least when the crucial moment came he could always face it, sometimes did so literally, as in this case ! He told me that he was thinking hard, all through that stern chase, of everything he had ever heard or read of the same kind, and suddenly remembered the hat-trick being employed by an Indian trapper in a story by Fenimore Cooper—one of the books of his own boyhood—and thought it worth trying ; for lungs and legs were threatening to give out, the bear was manifestly gaining on him, and there would not be much more time. 'Who hesitates is lost' is true in so many crises, while, as has so often been proved, a little daring and craft will easily get the better of brute strength.

For myself, if ever in my wanderings round about our camp it seemed getting too solitary and strange, or if I found that I was beyond earshot of the familiar sounds of our people, dogs, and other camp noises, I turned and made my way back speedily, having no fancy for an awkward *rencontre* ; yet within the distance of a stone's throw from the camp such an adventure befell me twice.

We were in the cardamom forests, where much of my husband's work lay, and near our camp was a small mountain pool by which I loved to sit. One day, for a wonder, the dogs were not with me ; they had started, but something attracted them back, and I went on alone—very fortunately as it chanced ; for as I sat by the pool, looking into the still, dark water and at the pretty shifting lights falling between the boughs overhead, I descried the reflection of a panther's face, much too near me as I thought, the animal being on my bank of the pool. At such times one's instinct is to keep quiet, holding one's breath, unless one be of the screaming order. Turning only my eyes, I saw the beautiful, sleek body lying almost flat as he drank. Meanwhile he had caught sight of *my*

reflection, and lifted his head, the water dripping from his jaws, and gazed full at me. Then he backed, absolutely without a sound or the faintest rustle of the fallen leaves, just like a scared cat (which indeed he was), creeping away into safety for *itself*. That was all he cared about; that is all they ever do care about, these wild things, no matter what stories sensation-writers may invent.

But the beauty of him! His coat was of gleaming tawny satin, with jetty rosettes, and his eyes of aqua-marine, as I could see while they were glaring into mine.

I felt quite sorry he had let himself be interrupted before finishing his drink comfortably; for I may truly say that all fear on my side vanished on seeing how he behaved, keeping his eyes on me furtively, for fear of my flying at him, I suppose! whilst, in reality, he could have made such very short work of me had he but known it.

On the second and similar occasion I almost stumbled over a panther, again close to the tents. We came face to face as I was turning the angle of a rock, under the shelving base of which he had been enjoying his noonday *siesta*. He was in the act of stretching himself preparatory to strolling off, and so near were we that he could have laid his paw upon me had he not been as frightened as I was. Far from wanting to do anything of the sort, he shrank back, flattened himself, and then turned on his stomach as on a pivot, and so crawled for a little way, till he could pluck up heart to gather his limbs together for a bound into cover, like the other panther instinctively making his own safety his first thought.

These encounters did not last long, not so much as a minute perhaps, but on each occasion my eyes met those of the panther, and we looked full at each other. What they saw in mine I cannot imagine, but I saw in their abject terror, and question as to how to save themselves without my stopping them. I suppose my appearance

filled them with affright as something they did not understand. The unknown is always terrifying to the wild nature, whether of a tiny field-mouse that scurries back to its nest in the hedge, scared to death at a footstep, or of the princely tiger himself, who slinks away into the familiar, friendly depths of his jungles at the scent or sight of man.

Yet it is certain that as we moved about in those forests we were observed by many a creature that we never saw. Of all animals commend me to a panther for inquisitiveness; he will follow, nay downright stalk, you from no other motive, himself, I need hardly say, well hidden the while, as F. discovered one day when he suspected the presence of some creature watching him. He was after bison, and would not let any other quest turn him aside, only seeing that the dogs kept to heel. The next day, on searching about, he found plain proofs that a panther had followed him. Through the livelong day this espionage had been kept up.

I may mention here a strange error I have often noticed in drawings and paintings of lions, tigers, and other animals of the same family. All the felines, small and great alike, walk with the legs of the same side moving together in a step, while other animals move theirs, as it were, cornerwise. This distinction is commonly ignored, though the tabby proof of it may lie no farther off than on the hearthrug!

With regard to the panther incidents related above, F. was rather envious of my 'unheard of luck'—so thrown away upon me—for though he went about in search of such meetings they never fell to *his* lot accidentally.°

I do not wish to represent myself as wonderfully courageous. In neither of those two instances was there any leading up on my part; indeed, had I known of a panther being anywhere near the pool or the rock most surely I had not stirred out of camp. To walk open-eyed up to danger when necessary, that is where the courage comes in.

I will now tell of an occasion when the writer of these notes played by no means a heroic part.

A day's sport had been arranged for the entertainment of two *shikar* friends of F.'s, then on leave, and he was keen to show them something good. The proposed scene of action was not far from camp—a *nullah*, or ravine—where a wild boar had his lair, a huge fellow that had been marked down as a worthy object for the sportsmen's prowess. I was to bear a part in the day's programme, and with a dog or two was assigned a station at a point of vantage, from which, if the boar broke cover below, I was to turn him by waving my arms and throwing down small pebbles, etc., with the idea of causing him to alter his course and head upwards towards the rifles and away from me, I being without one. As I stood there I, of course, kept a close watch upon everything in the ravine and along its sides; and the dogs watched *me* the while in perfect silence. Dear things! I don't think they quite understood my being there, and supposed themselves to be on guard over me, or their trained eyes would have been on the downward lookout too. It happened—contrary to my secret wish—that the boar did break cover just below me, and came pounding up through the long reeds and bushes from his hiding-place among the sedges in the *nullah*, whence the men, with their teasing stones, had dislodged him. The grizzly head, the great yellow-white, gleaming tushes were making straight for me—no mistake about it! At the first sight of him every idea but that of flight was gone. I stood not 'upon the order of' my going, but went at once, full pelt, the dogs after me.

No doubt the boar could have caught me up soon enough had he been so minded—and if he had I should not have been writing here—but he did not even maintain the chase very long. The behaviour of the dogs, first lagging and then trotting leisurely, might have shown me that they saw

nothing to run from, so when I at length dared to glance over my shoulder there was no boar in sight. Meanwhile not a shot had been fired. Evidently the day's sport was spoilt; but little cared I, though destined to hear plenty about it later, and that not in the way of congratulation or praise. Never again did F. make arrangements for me to be of the party when they were after pig, nor did I ask to go.

Once F. brought back from a pig-sticking excursion a lovely little hog deer—so called from the slight resemblance of its curved back to that of the boar tribe. The grass had been fired, and its mother was unable to rescue it; but he did so, and carried it all day inside his shirt, riding though he was, and with a long spear to manage. Neither did he shorten the day's sport on its account: he fed it with a rag dipped in milk, and it slept warm and safe. So tiny was this little creature that it stood easily on one's hand. It had the neatest little black hoofs, and in a short time sprouting horns. If put out it would paw the ground angrily and ever so majestically, just like any other stag. Hog deer never stand higher than ten or eleven inches even when full grown, and are rarely found. In spite of our care for it this one came to an untimely end. When it was being taught to eat grass—not taking to it naturally as you would think—a small truss was accidentally left in its bed, and it fed then to such purpose as to become 'hoven' —an extended state of the stomach—and it did not recover.

Another quaint pet once brought home by F. was a leopard-cat kitten, whose mother had deserted it, or more likely been shot. When full grown it was not so big as an ordinary cat, and a perfect miniature leopard—panther as we called it—in form and colouring; its every movement betokening the jungle-bred creature. As a kitten it was desperately wild, and never became really domesticated, though it was gentle enough with those it knew, yet not moving freely among them, always skirting the sides of

the room or verandah in surreptitious fashion; at the same time it was fearless, and also when young it liked to be nursed. We fed it only on brown bread and milk—white bread it would not touch—which it always liked, even when it was grown up. Before it was well out of its kitten-hood the forest instincts awoke. By day content to lie up indoors, just at four o'clock it would yawn, stretch its tiny limbs, and wander off, uttering a very peculiar grating cry, not in the least cat-like, to prowl about just as its wild brothers would do at the self-same hour; sometimes creeping in again late at night, when it was seldom hungry, having perhaps had a successful raid amongst our chickens if it had not been watched.

Another curious thing about this kitten was its love of water, in this differing from the ordinary household pet, whose detestation of it is proverbial. It would play with it from choice, often jumping on to the dinner table to dip its paws into the finger-glasses. It could swim like a duck too, and enjoyed crossing a narrow stream that ran through the garden. Panthers are the same in this respect, proving that our kitten was more panther than cat. It was, however, quite friendly with our cats, though not mating with them.

One evening a lady who was dining with us was startled by seeing her dinner—a snipe—suddenly snatched off her plate just as she was beginning upon it by some creature that she could see was not a cat, and which she said she thought was a young wild beast. It was 'Koori,' then full grown, though hardly cat size. We had heard the grating cry heralding a visit, but thought the sight of strangers might scare him away. He knew no fear, however, with a meal on that snipe in prospect. We saw him look round, sniffing, and then, like a lightning-flash, leap up under our guest's arm; and the snipe was gone—'Koori' too! Pursuit would have been vain; he had vanished into the darkness of the garden, and was no more seen that night.

Sometimes, though rarely, it would climb upon one's lap. F. was his first favourite, the reason being very plain, namely, that he always wore flannel, and there was nothing this kitten liked better to *eat*, swallowing every bit of the wool! Many a large hole did it gnaw under his coat, while seemingly asleep on his shoulder, being in reality very wide awake; for it growled at the least movement—a mite of a growl certainly, but an angry one. Even when F. knew what was going on he never interfered. Far from being vexed, I verily believe that so long as it was not harming itself—its own instincts would prevent that—he felt flattered at being made so free with by the savage, or rather untamable, little thing; for such it was to the last, though condescending to eat our food, at the same time roaming about the scrub and bushes, just like any beast of prey in the wilds. Indoors, when not sleeping, it was always on the lookout for something woollen—a sock was a joyful find. Nothing could hang within its reach without the edges being fringed and the corners chewed off—a little tablecloth among other things was much relished; the only plan was to keep it provided with bits of flannel. In regard to this habit, as well as in the fancy for water, two other leopard-cats we had at different times were the same as 'Koori'; not outgrowing it either, though none of them stayed with us after reaching maturity, wandering farther and farther afield, returning at longer intervals, and at length never being seen again. In each case we heard them unmistakably several times. Food was put for them in the accustomed places, but never taken, as we knew by there being no footmarks in the plate, it being a habit of theirs to stand in their food—all of them did the same. So we did not fear for their being starved, the less so as it was just at the same age that each left us, to please itself in obeying its own vagrant instincts.

CHAPTER IX

River scenery—*Kus-kus* grass—Crocodiles—Riverside folk—Riding on gourds—Malaria—The Bamboo stone—Pigmies, their food and dress—Methods in illness and old age.

Our fishing expeditions were those most of all to my mind because of the enchanting country into which they carried us.

Imagine a stretch of river fringed with swaying bamboos, its surface of lake-like stillness, shimmering blue under a vivid sky, and everywhere starred with water-lilies resting on their broad, shining leaves, which float languidly in the furnace heat. Dotted here and there are numerous islets, softly grey-green with palms and tall fern fronds, their reflections as lovely as themselves; while on either side are alleys of shade, refreshing merely to look into, where the water darkly quivers beneath leafy, flickering shadows. Many as lovely a region there is, I doubt not; a more lovely one there could never be.

Here grew the *kus-kus* grass, the sweet-scented roots of which are made into fans—the great circular fans with eight-foot handles resting on the floor, and waved by attendants behind their masters; and also smaller ones. The roots are spread in a thick, wide fringe round a centre-piece of very light wood, gaily painted and jewelled if for princely hands. I have several of these fans. When wetted they give out a delightful fragrance, and a whiff of their Eastern breath can waft me back, as with a magician's wand, amongst those Indian surroundings, so vivid in my recollection.

Beautiful as Paradise, this place—called Serimungalom—was like Paradise, too, in being provided with its serpent, here in the form of crocodiles, generally called 'muggors.' But for them bathing would have been delightful; as it was, the idea of it was only tantalising; for though the people living about didn't mind them, we did. The creatures lay basking on the mossy banks and sandy reaches, looking so exactly like logs that one might easily make the mistake of taking a seat on one. Very bold they were, too; if not attacking, yet neither getting away, and apt to try chances for a meal if unobserved.

One night F. had fixed his fishing-wheels, and meant to sleep till the whirring, indicating a bite, should wake him. One or other of the men was to keep watch, but he trusted most to his own perceptions. After a time something—he never knew what—did wake him, though the wheels were still and the watcher snoring. Sitting up he made out a 'mugger' creeping towards him, just its own length away; he turned it back into the water with a push, and shifted himself to another place.

I never saw people lead an easier life than did the riverside dwellers of those parts. The men were always fishing or bartering their catches with other villages in exchange for various commodities; the women and the children, who *swarmed*, had nothing to do, apparently, but eat, play, and look at us.

Whether it be from the nature of the water I do not know, but the skin of these men, who spend nearly all their time in it—often up to their necks—is scaly-looking and iridescent, with very much the appearance of the film which gathers over an iron-impregnated pond; that of the children is already faintly so, while the old men are quite mother-of-pearly brown. The women, being more or less clothed, are not so affected, but the rest, who are satisfied with six inches of rag for raiment, show a good deal of bare surface,

which looks very odd when lit up by the sunshine. They are dexterous in spearing fish, and also in shooting them with short arrows attached by a cord to a blow-pipe. These pipes are reeds, of a very hard surface, and are wonderfully carved and decorated; they are seven or eight feet long and not more than an inch thick.

Men, women, and children all get about the river on gourds, hollowed out and made water-tight. The gourds are of all sizes and of eccentric shapes; convenient ones too, and there is no difficulty in mounting them: the rider sits astride, perfectly safe, and buoyed up in the strongest current. It was quite a sight to watch a large ring of these fisher-folk—some two or three dozen perhaps—bobbing about on their odd little saddles, holding up a great net in mid-stream, and making fine hauls, chanting melodiously the while. F. tried one of these gourds, and found that its use required no practice, as by no possibility can you go under if your gourd be trustworthy. That, of course, you must make sure of.

The year we were at Serimungalem was the seventh, or seeding year, of the bamboo, when malaria, always present in these low-lying regions, is said to be more than usually rife, and especially virulent. The thirteenth day is the critical time after leaving a fever locality; not invariably with all types, but it was so with the sort of fever and ague that we and those with us were alike subject to. Tide over that day and you might consider yourself safe for the nonce, though if none in the camp were down with it by then it would be such a wonder as never happened.

One may become case-hardened to a certain extent, when it may take to affecting one in a fresh form; but malarial fever is not a thing to be resisted by any effort of will—by 'not giving in to it,' as people say so glibly of other people's ailments: it is stronger than the strongest, playing havoc with, and breaking down, the grandest constitution. From

the first day of exposure F. dosed his people with *the* great specific—quinine; thus taken in time an attack might be mitigated, or even warded off. I treated myself in the same way, three grains being the usual quantity for a first dose. F. himself was past that; quinine had no effect on him, except to make him deaf, with rushing noises in the ears—a condition called being 'cinchonised,' from the name *cinchona* (Peruvian bark), from which quinine is obtained. Strychnine and Fowler's Solution of arsenic were alone of any use to him, at best only shortening an attack. I have myself taken twenty and thirty grains of quinine a day, measured in our practised Indian fashion—a teaspoonful levelled off with the finger being twenty grains, near enough. That mixed in a little raw brandy would sometimes cut short the premonitory symptoms; it was of no use if shivering had already set in. After I had had a good deal of malarial fever, it suddenly stopped, but only to change its outward character; for sores came out on both my feet—simply another form of the malaria, we were told, and a very detestable one it was, laming me for six months. Then the old form returned, and I was downright grateful for it, so accustomed does one get to the fixed idea that one must have malaria somehow.

It was on this trip that we had the good fortune to find a most rare thing, or perhaps I should say a thing rarely found—the Bamboo stone. Our people were splitting up bamboos for shingles with which to roof the huts, and called out delightedly at their discovery. This stone might be taken for an ordinary white pebble from the seashore till its history is known; it is cloudy or milky-looking, the size of a damson. Although of no account in the way of money, it surely has a value and interest of its own, when one thinks of the long years it has taken to gather and crystallise, occurring only in very old bamboos. It is composed entirely of pure silica, that substance which gives

the glossy, glassy hardness to the bamboo as to all giant grasses, rattans, canes, etc. I never saw this stone found but that once, and F. said that it was a rare occurrence in his experience also.

As we travelled up the river on rafts, or rode along its banks to encamp farther on, some people of a most odd little tribe visited us, none of them standing much more than four feet high. They were basket-makers by occupation. They were used to F., as he inspected those parts yearly, but they never tired of staring at me, as I was a novelty to them then; not admiringly, however—I was too big for a woman, they thought—peering round corners furtively and comically, with that mixture of shyness and inquisitiveness which is as characteristic of the wild man as of the wild animal; not so *very* shy after all, but shy and inquisitive by turns. If I approached them—I was quite as much interested in them as they were in me—they made off, but kept peeping in and out at the camp work, volunteering small services such as chopping, fetching, carrying, etc., knowing full well that there were many things much to their fancy to be had in return—knives, for example, or perhaps even chewing-tobacco. I dâresay they wished that F. came oftener; indeed, they said so when we went away.

This chewing-tobacco, so greatly prized by all, is prepared in long strings of some twenty inches. We never started on a trip without a great bale of it for the use of our people, including beaters, *mahouts*, and hangers-on generally, for whom work could always be found, each man's portion being several strings twice a day.

Money the little people refused to take for their baskets. If offered it they held their baskets tighter, looking at each other and laughing, as if much entertained, herein showing their intelligence; for they knew that we sold nothing, so that money would not get for them what they wanted of

us, but they pressed on *me* some specimens of pretty white and red-stained work as gifts. It was easy to guess what would please them best in return: tobacco—and it did! They were given several strings each, and walked off, enrolling themselves then and there among our people, though what work they did we hardly knew beyond lazily chopping wood or splitting a few bamboos. On the strength of such light labours, however, they marched up boldly with the rest, though careful always to keep at a distance from them, to receive the daily rations of, to them, unaccustomed food, consisting of rice, curry stuff of sorts, and a measure of *raggi*[1] flour, which they knew how to prepare for eating by making it into cakes, and relished half-raw, half-singed in the smoke of a wood fire. When the precious tobacco was handed out each eyed the other's portion to see that no one had more or longer strings than himself. Our own people were not so particular, knowing that there was plenty more that would be dispensed without stint. F. paid attention to these things as to many others which, to such childish minds, were far from being trifles. Besides, it was well to keep these folk in a merry good-humour, for though they were not of much use they had horrid little ways of revenging themselves for any supposed slight or unfairness, such as disturbing the fishing-grounds or shooting their arrows into the game coverts. As it was we got on well with them, treating them like the grown children they were, with impartial justice, too. This they evidently appreciated; for when disputes arose the ruled *against*, equally with the ruled *for*, showed their approval by pulling and cracking every finger-joint.

Their usual food was roots and tubers, dug up and eaten raw. Yams (sweet potatoes) they grew for themselves, eating them raw also; but once they were given some by

[1] *Raggi* is a coarse flour only used by natives. It is made from a cereal and is pinkish in colour.



NIGERIA RAILWAY AND VIEW OF THE PLAINS

our men that had been boiled and baked in hot ashes, and, relishing the novelty, soon learned the knack of doing the same. They fed on grubs, too, which I suppose would not stand cooking, industriously digging them out of the earth and cutting them out of decayed wood; bee-grubs, too, when they had the luck to find a young comb; but *the* great delicacy was a queen white ant in the grub stage, about the size of one's little finger, very unpleasant to our eyes, but just right to theirs. Seeing these creatures hunted for, found, and popped into the mouth with gusto was simply nauseating. The queens were rare, but the smaller grubs were gobbled up greedily too. These they collected on a leaf, sitting down to the feast as we might to enjoy cherries or other fruit after we had gathered it. One would not willingly watch such a repast, but one could not help seeing it.

The dress of the little men was as simple and as easily come by as their food; it consisted merely of a basket for the waist and loins, ingeniously fashioned in two pieces, and fitting their persons well. Of building construction, however, they seem to have little idea, living in natural holes and caves.

A flat stone outside the boundary was the only market-place allowed by other communities to these little outcasts, whose touch is regarded as contamination. On it they must place their money or baskets in exchange for the salt, *raggi*, *jaggheri*, plantains, fish, axes, knives, or whatever it was they wanted.

The women were the oddest little beings ever seen, and indeed, except for their human faces, were like nothing but animals, either in appearance or behaviour. What ideas they might have I could not discover—I wished I could. The first I saw of these tiny women was once when I was sitting in camp, and noticed some dark objects darting in and out from behind a rock some distance off, peeping over

it and ducking down again. They kept their faces hidden, so in order to get a better view I stood up; but at my least movement they disappeared, and then hopped away, almost on all fours, as if to them that were quite the easiest mode of progression; of course, they did it to make themselves as unnoticeable as possible—the true animal instinct. In very truth their lives were not far removed from those of monkeys.

The sight made me hope that the re-incarnation theory might be true, as the only way—so at least it seems to some people—of reconciling conflicting ideas, conflicting, that is, to our limited comprehensions. Perhaps in this very theory lies the answer to the perpetual why and wherefore surging up in our minds at the sight of degraded existences, which after all may be so only in appearance, the reality being that they are passing through a transition stage.

Discords, we are told, have their place in harmony. That things will be balanced one day most of us believe, but while some are content to leave it at that, others equally earnest are unable to do so.

As a woman myself, the condition of these wives and mothers touched me the more. Alike in our womanhood, there was yet a world of difference between us—nay, æons of development, I would rather think. As they are now, stunted mentally and physically, so was I; as I am, so are they to be. Not that there is much to choose, in point of development, between these know-nothings and the degenerates of our own race, the last having something to unlearn.

Some one has fancifully said of self-consciousness that it 'sleeps in the stone, dreams in the animal, and wakes in man.' These little people and their like in many a corner of the world are not to be pitied, rather are they to be envied; not theirs the fever of competition, of baulked ambition, and of dashed hopes, which moves more civilised

men so profoundly. Yet we should not wish to retrace the steps of progress; the goal must be nearer for us, however distant still, that goal of which Tennyson speaks as

'The one far-off, divine event
To which the whole creation moves,'

and from which some would exclude all animals—a large proportion of 'the whole'—though Bishop Butler in his day, and Charles Kingsley more recently, would have them excluded from nothing when wrongs come to be righted, arguing that there cannot be two sorts of justice at one bar.

But to return to my strange little friends. It was a great amusement taming these wild little women by offering them things to eat—the first idea that occurs to one in coaxing an animal to make friends. It had to be something familiar, of course, cocoanut or *jaggheri*, or something else that they had tasted before. I don't doubt that a fine grub would have enticed them more quickly than anything, but that was beyond me. I felt it quite a triumph when, for the first time, they came round their coign of vantage—the rock—and advanced towards me, one behind another, in a string, each pushing her neighbour to the front that she should bear the brunt of the encounter.

If I stirred the entire string dropped on all fours, not exactly as an animal does, but using their hands to get along with as much as their feet, and were gone! Or if one of them did advance within reach of my proffered delicacy, I had to keep as still as if I were dealing with a shy beast or bird; then a tiny, shapely brown hand snatched at it, and the bold owner was off to a safe distance in an instant, to begin nibbling with her brilliant teeth—very like a monkey, but an improvement on a monkey in that she broke off bits to give the rest. First one and then another behaved in the same way, till presently others from afar came up cautiously, thinking it looked safe. The slightest thing

was enough to scare them for the moment, when they took to their hands and feet immediately, though it became only make-believe as their timidity wore off. Soon familiar and inquisitive were not the words to describe their behaviour! They attended me in troops, never tired of touching my clothes, and especially my shoes, which at first they thought grew on me. This is no exaggeration: they defied me (I was told) to remove them! I did so, to amuse myself by watching their faces the while.

In the end, having proved myself to be harmless, I was delighted to see them go away, to bring back their babies to show me—fat, brown balls, quite as big as other babies, which was somewhat surprising considering the diminutive size of their parents, none of their mothers being even four feet high.

In health there could not be a merrier or more happy-tempered set of little people than this, but if the scourge of smallpox appeared amongst them, the lot of the one attacked was appalling indeed. Such a one was conveyed into the jungle—the very heart of it—some sort of thatch shelter was built up about him, and there he was left with a supply of food and drink. After that, far from being waited on, or even inquired after, or the supply of food replenished, his very neighbourhood was shunned. A large pot of water and coarse bread for a fortnight was —so I was told—considered all that was needful. At the end of that time the sick person must be either dead or better; if better he could walk back to his family. Thus they would argue, if, indeed, they did anything but follow immemorial custom. That some did survive this regimen their scarred faces testified.

It is also their habit to carry the very old and feeble folk away to some distant, solitary spot, where they are expected to die, and leave them with a merely complimentary supply of sustenance.

Passing over these and a few other drawbacks in their ways, I should be well pleased to find myself in their neighbourhood once more.

As far as I am aware, none of these pigmies of Southern India have ever been brought away from their own country to this, to be exhibited as shows to the curious, and I should be very sorry to think of such a fate befalling them.

CHAPTER X

Home by canal—Maidenhair fern—Canal women and crocodiles—Bathing mats—*Pishashas*—A 'cat-eyed' peon—Chowry, the gardener's child—Ways of detecting crime—Chowry's hair—The tattooing of Chinniah.

Our business on this tour being completed, we were to go home to Calicut, by water still; but instead of our journey being along a lovely, romantic river it was to be by a canal, which when nearing Calicut merged into the backwater. Though sounding more prosaic beforehand, it proved quite as charming as the other.

We were poled along in a roomy house-boat with a movable tilt: nothing pleasanter could have been devised. The servants had their house-boat too, the cook manipulating his stove very cleverly aboard, though always under protest; for he said that everything tasted the same—of kerosene—liking it best when a halt was called, so that he could land and do himself justice with an impromptu stove-range.

Fish innumerable were caught, and wild duck also were plentiful, tasting very like fish themselves.

Sometimes we glided between perpendicular banks thirty feet high, each an unbroken sheet of maidenhair fern; not the kind with very minutely divided fronds, but the true maidenhair with delicate brown stems and tremulous leafage. The boatmen were made to stop that whole squares might be cut out for removal to our own home, and more was brought to us later. There were no flowers on these cliffs, but a few other sorts of fern interspersed with the maidenhair. The climate—steamy hot—suited them

exactly, and is the atmosphere aimed at in a conservatory for tropical plants. For miles it was the same, alternating with stretches of level country, either wooded, or with fields of waving paddy (rice), for all the world like soft green plush.

One day as we were passing such a flat bit, where the banks were muddy and trampled-looking, I happened to dangle my fingers over the boat's side; whereupon the men made signs to me to take them in, telling F., who interpreted to me, that the crocodiles would suppose them to be fish. A creepy idea that, its being taken for granted that there were crocodiles alongside on the lookout for food; so I kept my fingers strictly to myself afterwards, and got F. to ask if the crocodiles were likely to climb into the boat after them. The reply was, 'No, that would be prevented,' which was meant reassuringly; but it scared me the rather, as I had not put the question seriously in fear of an attempt. Yet on a previous occasion, when we were on a raft, an extra voracious, or especially daring crocodile did follow, and actually begin to board, us. At this the man poling thrust his bamboo into the open jaws and pushed it as far down as he could, thus effectually checkmating the intruder. I expected to see the water reddened with its blood and then to have it killed outright. No such thing! It merely took itself off, clambered up the bank, and started eating some fish bones, as if nothing had happened.

Hereabouts, half-hidden amongst gardens shady with toddy and cocoanut palms, plantains, and other trees, houses clustered, despite the crocodile drawback. That it was considered none became more and more evident as we proceeded, for at one point in our voyage where a huge crocodile lay basking, half-asleep, in the sun, two women sat composedly drying their long hair but a yard or two away from it. They called out for those higher up on the bank to come down and look at us, and out they all flocked,

old and young. One woman—a pretty, laughing creature, no darker than a European *brunette*—had her baby on her hip; putting it down to sprawl in the mud she picked up a piece of fish and held it out carelessly, without looking in the direction of the crocodile, which did not so much as turn its head, so overfed must it have been. At some wondering questions of ours she said that this one was generally there; she thought it guarded her child, who liked it!

'Were children never taken then?' 'Yes, sometimes, and kids and buffalo calves too.'

I wanted to ask why they lived in such an unspeakable place, but the question did not seem worth putting—it answered itself. They lived here because it was their home, and they had always lived here. According to them they had no choice; the boatmen, who also lived beside the canal, plying up and down it, said the same. The pretty young woman quite understood my thought as I pointed away to the safer, distant fields, then to the child and its 'guardian' (?); but she only shook her head—such a trim, neat head, shining with cocoanut oil, the hair piled high, and kept together by a single long silver pin—so did the others standing round, all comely-looking, except a few old crones, perfect witches for ugliness; smiling, too, in quite a superior way at my most silly questionings. They were all of a mind—that was plain—in seeing no reason whatever for leaving the place: 'their people before them had built the houses and planted the gardens—they must have been right in choosing the spot; their men folk were all engaged in the canal traffic,' and so on.

I shook my head too; for me that crocodile and its fellows were the answer to every argument. I could not but think how easily their houses might be put farther back, how safely they might then live—and said so; but no, to them everything was in favour of this position. Their final reason

was given in the form of a question. 'As their children all played more in the water than on land, what were they to do with them anywhere else?' I could only stare in amazement at such notions and such mothers, telling them that though we had no loose crocodiles in England, children were brought up successfully even away from water to play in. Yet that there was no lack of love and pride in these women was plain to see as they crowded round our boat, which had been grounded, holding out their children, and putting them into it without the least shyness; and all the while, as they pushed past, that crocodile was lying there, as still as the Sphinx. It was simply a lifelong, inherited familiarity with the conditions of their lives that caused them to ignore what to us seemed a danger. As to any risk of being drowned, 'How could any one be drowned where there was no current? Everybody there could swim; the babies learned to swim just as they learned to crawl; they were tied to a bough in case they should go too far, that was all, and would not drown any more than the young frogs in the rushes'—I give as near a translation of her words as possible.

Everybody bathed, too, disporting themselves in the cooling water at all leisure times; and the way the women contrived to do so in public, yet in perfect privacy, was most ingenious because so very simple. No stranger would have guessed that there were any women there, all that met the eye being large cane mats, some six feet square, bobbing about of their own accord—in no way remarkable. Under these they bathed unseen, a narrow band in the centre holding one firmly on to the head of each, in the same way as the hats earlier mentioned. The merest glimpses were to be caught of quick, formless movements in the dark, almost black, shadows immediately beneath, in which they danced and sported, the brown limbs merging and mingling with the swirling water in a way you would

hardly believe possible, but so it was. Not for the world would these women bathe thus in public unless they knew themselves to be perfectly hidden, each under her mat, for they are as shy as mice. There was quite a flotilla of them, interesting me much when I knew them to be something more than floating mats. And never a one troubled about crocodiles either—a state of things altogether we should hardly have believed to exist unless we had seen it.

India was new to me then, to my grown days at least, and many scenes passed before my wondering eyes, some of surpassing interest and beauty, others of a hideousness often coarse or grotesque. All my experiences in those unfrequented places were such as had never entered my imagination before.

The women of Poolpadi, and other places on the canal-side, so regardless of the peril at their doors, and going freely about between their villages for business or pleasure, are equally fearless when taking longer journeys—either singly or in twos and threes—through a bit of gloomy forest or tangled thicket—afraid of nothing except the dreaded *pishashas* (devils) that they believe to be everywhere about them, and that must be propitiated with all sorts of things laid here and there in crevices, sacred stones, and hollow trees. The fear of these *pishashas* holds sway all over India. I once, just to try him, asked a servant of ours to get for me a bunch of plantains, placed, as I knew, for this very purpose, offering him treble its value in annas (about fourpence). With deep salaams he begged pardon for disobeying my command, and I held out quite a large bribe in vain. No bribe has any effect in a question of religion, even among the very poorest. Though our Hindu or Mussulman servants and these country people were of varying beliefs, all were one in their respect for the rights of the *pishashas*, who could revenge themselves on every one infringing them, in ways that each would best feel—blighting

the paddy crops of one, killing the cattle and goats of another, or even sending a grey-eyed firstborn child!

This last calamity is considered very awful, grey eyes being 'cats' eyes'; to be called 'cat-eyed' through life would be a curse no one could stand up against. The prejudice is universal in India.

Only once did I ever see a pure-bred native with grey eyes; to do so is the rarest thing in the world, though amongst Eurasians they are common, and sometimes very beautiful in their type of face. He was a peon of ours, and was detected in horrible torturing of an old tribesman, one of the jungle people who are so helpless in the hands of some belted wretch armed with a little 'brief authority,' unless they can make their voices heard.[1] The old man had been hung up by a cord round his crossed wrists: the peon came up to the verandah, pulling him along, more or less gently, as I could see from where I was sitting, and in F.'s absence began relating his version of the story to me that I might interest myself—a thing I never did, in the sense of interfering—on his, the peon's, behalf, telling me of his vigilance in the prosecution of his duty and of the dangers he had run in capturing this formidable rogue, and so on.

One glance at the trembling old man and then at the peon with those *grey* and *feline* eyes, for such they truly looked in his dark face, was enough to turn any one against the latter, whatever there might be to be said on his side. On the other side nothing was needed to enlist my sympathies but the sight of the victim. Holding up his wrists, cut to the bone by the cruel cord and the weight, slight as it was, of his wizened little frame, the poor old man mumbled something which was interpreted to mean that he did not know who the thief was in a certain case in his village (of which he was the head-man), and that he had been tortured

[1] I am speaking here only of peons who abused their power; as a body they are fine fellows.

to make him give a name which he could not give. The peon's story was the same, and it was likely enough, only that according to him he was not guilty of the torture; it must have been his substitute or predecessor. 'How long ago was that?' I asked, for the old man's wounds were evidently recent. My mind was quite made up, and I promised that justice should be done. The peon understood as, with cringing salaams, he backed himself off.

The old man was taken away to be supplied with food and something soothing for his aged, injured body, both of which he so much needed; then he slept in peace, knowing that all would be well as soon as he could get speech with the *Doray*. The fact that all had access to him was the very simple secret why my husband was reverenced and feared by those under his jurisdiction; the tales of all were listened to with attention that their truth or falsehood might be sifted out, and rights were respected instead of the poorest or the weakest being crushed, as must often happen when there are no means to pay go-betweens, in the form of interpreters, if these are required.

In this instance the peon was then and there dismissed the Government service for his illegal attempt to extort confession by torture. His face convinced *me* of his guilt, I know, and it was the grey eyes that did it. I should not have believed a word that peon had said even without the mute witness of those wounded wrists. Every proven case of cruelty ended in a similar way, and the perpetrator was given but short shrift. F. being paramount in his district in these matters, there was no appeal from his sentences.

Another quickly arranged form of persuasion often resorted to was the twisting of oiled rags round a man's, or even a woman's or a child's, fingers, and setting them alight in order to extort a name, perhaps a suggested one, according to what was wanted. The agonised creature mostly shrieked anything, everything, or if of different

metal, as some were, he might burn to the bone. That was common enough, and happened within our own knowledge, when a police constable was the brutal instigator, and his dismissal followed sharp on the heels of detection, though F. had no direct jurisdiction here.

The same sort of thing may sometimes be going on under your very nose.

A little girl, the child of one of our *mālees* (gardeners), was accused of stealing a bangle of mine. Part of her work was to change the plants and flowers in the rooms, taking away pots of fern and bringing in others, as arranged by her father. I had been writing on the verandah, and the heat being too great for me to stand even the weight of a bangle unnecessarily, I slipped it off my wrist and left it on the blotting-book for a moment while I went indoors. On returning very soon after I missed it directly, and asked the servants, who were always in attendance, if they had seen it. Of course, no one had seen it. No one but Chowry, the gardener's child, had anything to do there just then, they said, though that she had not been anywhere near during my absence I was quite sure. Saying that I would go away for half an hour, and should expect to find the bangle put back where I had left it by the end of that time, in which case no further questions would be asked, I went indoors again; but the plan, though carried out, produced no result.

When F. heard about it he said that whoever had taken the bangle would be the busiest in finding the thief; and so it turned out.

The next morning I missed the *mālee's* child. 'Oh! she was only with her mother.' The next day it was again the same story, but on the third day I saw her, far away, standing by her father; she had her cloth round her head and ears, covering her hands, too, which seemed to be themselves wrapped up. This was not her habit, and as these

people do the same thing, even to the arranging of their cloths, in exactly the same way every day, I determined to find out the reason for these changes, and called her. Having by that time learnt something of native practices, her continued absence had set me thinking: I had also noticed that the girl's father turned his face away, and looked oddly moved, when I asked for her. She came up to me, being obliged to do so, but with reluctance. I just said, 'Put your cloth back, Chowry'; this that I might see her hands, for one thing, though she still tried to keep them covered. When the wrappings were removed I found the delicate finger-tips swollen to bursting, needles and splinters having been forced under the nails! Her ears, too, were a shocking sight, swollen, shapeless, festered; indeed, they were nearly torn off her head, so frightfully had she been mutilated. All this to make her confess to the theft! That patient child never cried once before me, though her sufferings must have been sickening, and she was only ten years old!

By degrees the story was dragged out: the butler had had this done to her. She, being in and out of the rooms freely, was the very peg on which to hang his trick. Then F. came up—not by chance—and to him Chowry repeated her tale. He himself called the butler, and the other servants were summoned, except those having no indoor work; they were all men, the ayah, Logan-harri, being absent on a day's leave.

When they were all assembled F. ordered them to do what is regarded by these people as an act of gross disrespect, namely, to take off and unwind their turbans before a master or mistress. The look of set purpose on his face told me that this was no guesswork. His order was obeyed instantly and simply by each man, whatever his thoughts may have been; by all but one, that is. The butler alone demurred; he 'could not be seen without his turban,' and

so forth ; but it was all up with him now, and he had to comply ; no sleight of hand could avail him — and — out rolled my bangle !

It was explained to me later that a very few minutes before this, when passing round the back of the house, F. had seen the butler, while rearranging his turban, push something well in between the folds. He knew that the man would not keep his own valuables there, and the thought of my bangle occurred to him with such insistence that he was coming to talk the matter over with me and fix on a plan ; then seeing Chowry with me, her wrappings off, and the reason for them evident, everything instantly shook itself into place in his mind, and he acted, with the result I have described.

The man's conviction, of course, ruined his career as a butler among the English households of the neighbourhood, and we should not have been so hard on him for the mere theft itself ; it was the cold, cruel-hearted ill-usage of that child that fired us to extremes.

Chowry was cared for, and all that was possible done to promote her cure. She was promised gold sprigs to stick in all round the edges of her ears, when they should heal, instead of the little rolls of paper or stained reeds she had worn, also a ring or two for her fingers.

But, after all, what were the few isolated cases thus detected and punished compared with all that went on unchecked, not even interfered with, albeit well known ? These practices were too far-reaching and universal for individual effort to be of much use ; many well authenticated instances could be given of hideous wrong done to the innocent and helpless, but there is no need to dwell on such horrors.

Such a deed once perpetrated almost under one's very roof-tree—as in Chowry's case—one can hardly get it out of one's head again for fear of what may still be going on

below the surface. These people don't tell of each other lest worse befall them in revenge. There had never been any intention on the part of that *mālee* or his girl of letting us know about the awful coercion to which she had been subjected—it all came óut accidentally.

I have been told that in days gone by, before my time, natives were very simple—they are not so now—and they used to be given *chits* (tiny scribbles) to carry from one *sahib* to another containing requests or orders to thrash the bearer! In those unsuspecting days, also, the ordeal by rice was resorted to for the detection of a thief in any one's household. All were assembled, and each man made to take some raw rice in his mouth; the innocent munched away, but the guilty one could not do so; his mouth was too dry and parched in feverish terror for him to be able to masticate the hard grains—clear proof of guilt! This was certainly not a bad plan *if* you had a pretty shrewd idea as to the culprit, who, be sure, was watching you, and knew, if the rest didn't, that you knew him for the thief.

Another plan—and this F. sometimes adopted—useful when suspicion amounts to certainty, for otherwise it is apt to end in a *fiasco*, consists in using a small galvanic battery, so arranged that the suspect shall get a slight but startling shock on plunging his eager hand into a bowl of water with shining eight-anna bits at the bottom; every one but he can pick up a prize—self-convicted again. For justice this method of detecting guilt is about on a par with our ancient Saxon ordeals by fire, water, etc., unless one already *knows* the culprit, as F. made sure of doing.

Chowry, the gardener's child, the victim in the bangle-theft story, was in most respects an ugly little sprite, but she possessed one element of beauty in her long, thick hair. This hair her father once vowed as a sacrifice at his special shrine should his wife recover from an illness which had laid her low; she did recover, and her husband duly offered

up the beautiful hair—a sacrifice on his part as well as the child's—not a particle did he spare.

On this occasion, again, Chowry resorted to the vain expedient of muffling herself up as much as possible; but anything unusual aroused my suspicions, and I soon know why she did it. She did cry this time in bitter shame and distress over her shaved head, and nobody could help her here. Wonderfully soon, however, the bare head was reclothed and adorned with a freakish crop of silky curls, whereas the vowed hair had been *straight*! Its speedy growth was due to liberal anointings with cocoanut oil—a splendid thing for the hair—and Chowry was fully recompensed. She said, as I was admiring the curls, 'And I 've got my mother too!' quite believing that her mother had been bought off by the gift of her hair, and thinking that now to have curls growing instead was altogether a good bargain.

Another girl belonging to our household once begged for a week's leave—or it might be ten days—as she was going to have a fever. I naturally asked her how she could know that beforehand. She replied that her hands and arms were to be tattooed that day if leave were given, and that the consequent inflammation would certainly cause fever. The desired leave to get well in being granted, the girl beamed with delight. The operation was to be performed in the house, dependent on my 'gracious favour'; and at the appointed time the tattooing man punctually arrived with his box of instruments. *Any* time would not have done, the hour had been exactly calculated, in fact, foretold, at her birth—for Chinniah's horoscope was consulted—and now all was in readiness.

Hanging back, and looking far from happy, the girl came up into the verandah, several other women with her, one being our old fowl woman, a powerfully built person, on whose arms were wonderful examples of tattooed embroidery.

Chinniah sat down on the verandah floor, and the artist began his work. The reason for the presence of these friends soon became evident: they were there to hold her fast and prevent her from running away, as she well knew she would do if not prevented. It was only the usual precaution, the process being painful and lasting some hours, according to the design, and also, as I began to think, to the strength and endurance of the parties.

As had been expected, Chinniah writhed and struggled to get away; but her hand was held as in a steel vice by the unmoved, horn-bespectacled old gentleman, who took no notice whatever of her shrieks at every stab of his needles: the women also were her true friends, and knew their business. Her face was distorted with crying, her chest was heaving, her whole aspect was that of a person being tortured nigh to death. So horrified was I at the spectacle that I begged, nay, ordered, them to let her go, but at that she only shrieked the louder, '*Ille, ille*, Missus, please' ('No, no, missus, please'). On no account were they to loosen their hold of her.

To me the affair was almost as comical as it was horrifying, but to no one else present; they were all in grim earnest.

At last the girl became perfectly passive, only sobbing heavily; but those practised hands never relaxed their grip till the old man had finished—for a time, that is, as all could not be done at one sitting. Some lotion was poured over the punctured limbs, and after an interval for rest all began over again. It was wonderful to see Chinniah—her eyes flowing over with her present pain and the thought of more to come—offer her arm to the torturer and settle down once more, in the firm grasp of her friends, to undergo renewed agonies.

The pattern chosen was a fine, intricate lattice or network, which was to cover the backs of her hands, extending over the fingers and round the arms as far as the elbows,

so it was a long job. When all was at length over, Chinniah's tears dried, and the arms bathed and bandaged, so eaten up was she with vanity that she had to be threatened with having them tied together to keep her from exposing them to the heat and the bites of insects—perhaps to the spoiling of their beauteous effect in the future; and this argument prevailed.

The bandaging had to be attended to daily. Unsightly as those arms looked at first, they must have felt worse; but Pride, if it does feel pain, can yet bear any amount of it. I never saw such a struggle between resolute vanity and physical weakness; the power of the mind over the body could not have been more aptly illustrated; for there was no obligation on the girl to undergo this torture beyond her own desire to be at least equal to other women in her outward adornments—a sufficiently urgent one with her sex as long as the world lasts.

CHAPTER XI

Difficulties of travel—Travellers' Bungalow at Sultan's Battery—Broken-down bridges—A banquet under difficulties—Story of a premonition—Difficulties as to supplies—Substitute for coffee—Smallpox—The *dhoby's* ways—Indian thieves.

'THE best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley.' This holds good in most mundane affairs, as we found out from time to time, much to our discomfiture.

If I have not hitherto touched on the difficulties of our tours it is not because we never met with anything of the kind, or that no hitch ever occurred in our plans. To tell the truth, they were many and frequent: predicaments arose for which no provision had been, or could have been, made; but a way out was generally found, and they were put up with, more or less cheerfully, by all.

When a tour was in prospect our people, being just given the headlines, as it were, of the expedition afoot, were left to fill in details of arrangements themselves, and were held responsible for deciding what quantities of food supplies for all purposes must be taken from home, as well as for ascertaining what other necessaries could be procured by the way and where they would be obtainable. Our servants, therefore, were always chosen with an eye to their capabilities for such duties.

Written 'characters' are more reliable documents in India than sometimes in England, bogus ones *can* be bought, but it is not safe for servants to depend on them. If one requiring an applicant's services does not personally know his late master he probably knows some one who does, so servants once engaged can generally be trusted. Having

once told our people where we were going, for how long a time, and what our probable halts would be, F. could depend on everything that was possible being done to ensure our comfort.

At the same time, things did not go quite like clock-work. For instance, baggage-carts, dogs, etc., might all have set out days ahead, travelling by night if too hot by day, and taking the best roads available—the best were often bad; while we ourselves started later, riding, buoyed up by the strongly qualified hope that we should not reach our destination first, after all, to find that our arrival had been unheralded by peons, and nothing, instead of all, being in readiness. But with bad weather and worse roads the chances were accepted as even

It was with no shock of surprise, therefore, that on reaching the Travellers' Bungalow at Sultan's Battery,[1] at the end of a long ride, one wild monsoon day, we heard that until the bridges were mended no carts could cross. There were three of these bridges, the nearest being three, and farthest, nine miles off; one was burnt, we were told, one broken, and some *budmash* (rogue) had chopped down the third. The state of the bridges had been certified to F. quite recently, but, as it seemed, not recently enough.

Travellers' Bungalows are maintained by the Government for the use of travellers, and consist of several rooms furnished with tables, chairs, cots, etc., the floors being of beaten earth. Originally intended for Europeans, the richer class natives do, however, make use of them, and their recent presence is unmistakably evident in the betel-nut spit on the walls and floors and the peculiar odour of spices —in cleanliness some of them could not be excelled—left behind them. We found it so this time, as we were not

[1] It was at this place that a treaty of peace was signed by Tippoo Sahib in 1784. It is full of old ruined fortifications, and cannon-balls have been found here.

expected; had we been announced all traces of the last occupants would have been hidden under a coat of white-wash on the walls, and the floors would have been freshly 'leeped,' that is, bespread with cow-dung. This may sound disgusting, but is in reality a most cleanly plan, for the surface dries and hardens quickly. A newly-leeped floor also keeps off mosquitoes. Of course, the room would not be occupied while the leeping was still moist. It is the custom to treat floors thus in native houses, also in the kitchens and 'go-downs' (servants' quarters) connected with the houses of Europeans. These quarters, I may here mention, are quite detached, in order that the heat from the kitchen fires may not be felt in the houses, nor the smell of cooking be perceptible—a plan which might with advantage be adopted in many a cramped English household if it were possible to arrange it.

The fact that the traces alluded to were not yet removed showed that the travellers had but just left, so we could only hope that their expectations of finding the bridges beyond in order were well grounded, or they might, perforce, return, which would have been inconvenient for all parties alike.

One can be very comfortable in these bungalows if one has all one's necessaries with one, which unfortunately we hadn't, nor any immediate prospect of their arriving. The horses were better off, for they were stabled and promised a warm feed—no difficulty about that, as every village affords *gram*, a sort of grainstuff bullocks eat when they are lucky enough to get anything but what they pick up. As to our stranded carts, we knew that they were packed with food for men and animals, so that we were not disturbed about those with them, as every one was used to this sort of thing, and they would be looked up in the morning.

The old man in charge of the bungalow asked us what we should like for dinner, adding that he had only chickens;

the difficulty was to catch them; he was too old to run himself; as soon as it was dark they would roost, then they could be caught easily. We left it to him to solve the problem in his own way, and set to work drying our clothes, bit by bit, as we could spare them. A very cold process we found it, having come up from the hot, steamy low country, travelling upwards on the Western Ghats (hill-ranges) till we had here reached an elevation of some three thousand feet above sea-level, and we naturally felt the difference. Charcoal, glowing red in low three-legged braziers of clay, had been brought in to warm the rooms, and over the braziers frames like enormous hen-coops were set, upon which we spread our clothes—a device not to be equalled for thoroughness and safety.

Meanwhile the old man busied himself with preparing our dinner, finally smartening himself up in his gold-laced turban and belt and badge of office before serving it. We guessed beforehand that we should do wisely to trust all to him, though we did not expect great things. The result proved we were right, for this was the menu:—

Moorghi (fowl) in four distinct shapes and tastes.

Soup, strong and good.

Rissoles, with mashed sweet potatoes.

Ditto, boiled, with egg sauce and baked sweet potatoes, and some native cucumber-like green vegetable.

Two curries; one a perfectly delicious dry variety, known as 'country-captain,' and the other of hard-boiled eggs.

Nor was any customary accompaniment missing. There were 'Bombay ducks," a sort of crisply baked salt-fish for crumbling over the curries; and *poppodums*, a wafer-like biscuit, also for crumbling over; and green mint chutney!

Then appeared anchovy toast, all piping hot.

Yet the old man was single-handed, unless, perhaps, sundry scufflings in the back verandah while we were being

served in dignified fashion within indicated an impromptu assistant.

Plantain fritters and good coffee rounded off a banquet which could hardly have been bettered at home.

'Plenty salaams to the *Mem-Sahib*, but I have no tea,' said the old man, knowing our English ways. I told him how much better I liked coffee (a fib which, I trust, was blotted out then and there), and I asked for another cup.

They are all wizards, these cooks, at making something good out of nothing (from our point of view), but here was a born *chef*. Nor was he wasted in his solitude, for the visitors' book showed how many years he had served here and the reputation he had built up for himself, his Government 'pinchon' being now within sight.

F. had his brandy flask with him, and much delighted the old fellow by complimenting him on his skill and offering him a glass this wet, cold night. His eyes twinkled for answer as he went off quite youthfully to fetch a half cocoa-nut shell that served him for a glass, which when filled was received with deep salaams in a hand fairly trembling with the pride and pleasure aroused by the appreciative words.

At cock-crow the next morning carpenters were despatched to the place where the carts had been stranded, and when F. rode out himself he found them being lightened, the more easily to pull them over the temporarily repaired bridge, reloading them on the far side, the best thing to be done under the circumstances, though a long job, with three of these bridges to be thus manœuvred!

When, for the first and only time in my life, a premonition of danger came to me, it had to do with a broken bridge.

On long journeys we occasionally used a travelling coach holding a mattress and other bedding. One night—a very dark one, moonless and starless—I was fast asleep in the coach; F. was riding near it at a walk, and the string of

baggage-carts was crawling along behind. The route, with its roads and bridges, had been reported safe; it was an entirely new one to us both.

Suddenly I awoke with a strong sense of something untoward impending; then, that same instant, *knew* two things, namely, that we were approaching a bridge and that some of its planks were broken!

Very urgently I pulled the check-string and made the driver stop, telling him why. Not a question did the man ask as to how the *Dursani* could know; he only held his bullocks in tightly. F. now rode up to see what was the matter, and as I told him he too listened without argument, then dismounted, unhitched a bull's-eye lantern, and walked forward with it, throwing its light full upon the bridge, which he found exactly as I had described: several planks on the right-hand side were broken in at a junction, and looking close down he saw blood not yet dry, and white hairs sticking to the splintered ends, affording plain proof that the leg of a bullock had crashed through, to its grievous hurt, not long since.

By keeping to the extreme left-hand edge of the bridge it was found possible to get the carts over; a false step by lantern light on the bad side—although the break was not a wide one—could not be risked, nor that indefinable power that lurks in 'suggestion' ignored, though some people think fit to ignore such power.

But for my receiving that premonition one of our pondorous bullocks must inevitably have put his leg into the hole, which lay just in the natural line for one animal of a pair to take.

F. refrained from asking me the futile question, How did I know? taking it for granted that I should have told him if I could. The reason the warning came to us rather than to those preceding us must have been that it was meant to especially safeguard some one of our number.

The spiritual world is close around us, not in a far-away region ; it is only owing to the dulness of our present senses that we do not perceive its sights and sounds, says Canon MacColl, though I am not quoting him literally ; [1] perhaps it is due to the guiding of some denizen of that world when mishaps are avoided by means of presentiments or pre-monitions. We do not know.

The certainty I had felt as to the state of the bridge was so definite that it did not occur to me to doubt the warning, any more than if some one, going on ahead, had come back with the intelligence that it was not safe. Below the bridge flowed a river, not deep now, but its bed packed with boulders likely to break up whatever might fall through upon them. We never learned anything as to the fate of the injured animal that had left such painful traces. Most likely, after being extricated, it was made to go on somehow. To prevent a recurrence of such accidents F. had the bridge securely roped across at both ends to give warning of danger ; and passing carts could get by as we did.

Variety is charming : even our difficulties showed that quality. Something totally unexpected would happen, and soon after, perhaps, something equally awkward in an exactly contrary way. One day no coolies would be forth-coming, the next *two* gangs would arrive, marshalled by separate peons, and on meeting would seize on the loads and fall to blows, or rather the show of them, while we were waiting anxiously up above for the *tappâl* (post) that was also to be brought by them.

As to the stores, they were not supposed to be allowed to get low before being replenished, but to be kept up to an average quantity in a methodical manner. Now and then, however, practice lagged behind theory, and our demands

[1] The *Reformation Settlement*, by the Rev. Malcolm MacColl, D.D., Canon of Ripon, p 177.

were met with 'plenty salaams,' but such and such an article was 'done finish.'

It was coffee that was 'done finish' on one occasion. That did not matter much to *us*—or ought not to have mattered, though it seems to me now that we were sometimes unreasonable—but to a native his 'kafi' is indispensable. After trying to make my ayah content herself with our tea, I found her drinking something that smelt fragrant and coffee-like, though that she had no coffee I knew. She offered me some of her decoction, but, though quite liking it, I could make no guess at all as to its origin, even on seeing the powder of which it was made, and she had to tell me that it was ground-nuts prepared like coffee berries, and I am bound to say it made a rare good substitute. Brunak, a modern health beverage made of roasted wheat, was not yet known, but is so like my ayah's ground-nut coffee that I should not know the difference.

Though it was a new idea to me that ground-nuts could be used as coffee, I was so fond of them, browned and sprinkled with salt, as to say one day that a coolie-load of them must be brought up, a greedy remark which I forgot as soon as uttered; but it was taken as an order, and the very next *tappál*, when a number of necessaries were expected, two men only arrived carrying thirty pounds of nuts apiece! That was only half a load each, but the nuts weighed so light that they took up a vast amount of space to be balanced on a man's head. The peon in charge begged to be excused for delay, as he had had to go far to collect the required quantity, no one village affording more than a few *seers*.[1] Neither had he been able to get more coolies then.

F. asked the man whose order it was, having quite forgotten what I had said; knowing, moreover, that a bagful would have met my utmost desires. It was the *Mem-Sahib's 'hookum,'* was the reply—then we remembered.

[1] A *seer* is a varying dry measure, generally about two pounds.

'*Bhŏt atcha*,'[1] F. assented gravely for the upkeep of my dignity, adding that they had done well to procure the nuts with so little delay, considering.

But a more serious question was concerned when on another occasion the peons sent a swift messenger empty-handed to ask whether or not the coolies should bring up the stores now waiting at the foot of the hill, as the only village where they had been able to procure rice in any quantity was full of smallpox, which was indeed rife, they heard, in all the villages, more or less; so what was to be done?

None of our people were at all troubled for themselves; that was Kismet, said the messenger; and we had to be equally philosophical. Still, not desiring that particular supply of rice, we sent back word that some was to be got elsewhere, but that the men were to come up instead of staying where they were, exposed to infection. As they did not belong to the village mentioned they were not wanted there, so we had no choice. We isolated and dosed them on arrival, and no harm came of it.

Unless smallpox should be so general as to interfere with the daily avocations of life—the shopkeepers no longer sitting over their wares, and the buyers sickening and dying—we might never hear of its presence at all. So much was this the case that when told of it we hardly regarded it as news, rather taking it for granted that none of the villagers were quite free.

I was once staying with a friend who knew India better than I did at that time. We were not in camp, but at her home. One morning the ayah complained that a particularly large and fine sheet was missing from amongst the clean clothes just brought in by the *dhoby* (washerman). Mrs. E. replied by asking her if she knew of any funeral then going on or in preparation. 'No,' she did not, but she

[1] *Bhŏt atcha* = 'Very well,' and is emphatic, *atcha* being literally 'good.'

would find out immediately; it was no use asking the *dhoby*, he 'would only lie,' and she went away on her errand.

This seemed to me highly irrelevant, but that was only my ignorance, for it was the main point. Mrs. E. told me that had the sheet been any ordinary one no more notice would have been taken than as of an oversight, but being that special one she guessed that it had been kept back for a funeral, to be spread over the corpse on a bier, either hired out, or for use by the *dhoby's* own family. It would not be burnt or buried, oh dear, no! but returned honestly the following week, or the next after, according to circumstances, with 'plenty salaams' for the 'mistik.'

The ayah found out that there was to be a funeral that very afternoon, so Mrs. E. decided to take a walk somewhere in the neighbourhood of its route. This was on the Hills, where Europeans do sometimes walk, so her doing so would not be remarked.

In India one learns to know a man's status unerringly at first sight by the way he wears his cloth or twists his turban, the varying caste marks, threads, etc.; his very trade has its distinctive signs, which are unnoticeable and meaningless to the eye of a 'grif.'[1] My friend was not a 'grif,' so directly the procession appeared it proclaimed itself to her as a *dhoby's* funeral. We ourselves—I was with her—were hidden from view.

The sheet that lay over the bier hung down deeply and was knotted at the corners. Mrs. E. whispered to me, 'It 's something infectious, for turmeric is tied up in the corners, and if it is my sheet we shall know it by that.' She let them pass on, then asked the last straggler of what disease the person had died. '*Ammah*' (smallpox), came the startlingly prompt corroboration of her words.

When the clean clothes were again brought home by the *dhoby*, in due course, sure enough there was the sheet with

[1] Anglo Indian for novice, tyro, greenhorn.

four *very* pale gamboge corners; and how beautifully that sheet was laundered! The best had indeed been done with it, but it takes more than a little boiling and bleaching to get turmeric stains out completely; still, if we had not been looking for them, it might have passed muster.

To save the *dhoby* much needless perjuring of himself, which he was already beginning upon, Mrs. E. told him that she knew how the marks came to be there, but I have forgotten whether any further justice was meted out to him, as well as what was done with the sheet. Very likely he walked off with that, though there was no more risk of infection from it than from the rest of the things or from the man himself; we had been running the same risk all along without knowing it. And so it was always: sometimes one knew of the danger, sometimes one did not—that was all the difference, and one soon learned not to worry.

As to discharging the *dhoby* for his villainy, in the hope of finding one with better principles, the chances were of a distinction without any difference; for every one of them lived in the *dhoby* village, where all were of a trade, and more or less distantly related to each other, a man's calling being hereditary in India: what he is that will his sons be, and his son's sons, to the twentieth generation. I am speaking of the peasant class, which is unaffected by Western influences. It used to be the same in all classes, but there are changes; the 'old order' is surely giving 'place to the new.' The Anglo-Indians of an earlier day would scarcely know it for the same land were they to find themselves back in India now.

However, some things are stationary, and amongst them may be notably reckoned the use of those great flat stones of satin-smooth surface which are the main part of the *dhoby's* stock-in-trade—heirlooms in his family, moreover—whereon one's property is banged in order to cleanse it.

The bigger articles are treated singly, smaller ones, such

as collars, handkerchiefs, etc., are strung by hundreds on a long thin cane; with this the *dhoby* flogs the stone. His soap he gathers off a tree—the *Saponaria*—in the form of nuts, contriving to make as white a lather with them as with the best 'primrose,' and he completes the process of purification by boiling everything in water wherein cow-dung has been stirred. Does this *modus operandi* sound rough and disgusting to Western ears? The *dhoby* is only using in its crude state—like his forefathers for centuries upon centuries before him—one of the natural products out of which modern chemistry conjures washing powders and other cleansing mediums with fine names. For all his primitive methods he will return one's things—the most delicate—not over-much torn, and all of a snowy freshness lovely to behold.

Of Burmese and Chinese laundrymen I have no experience; some say they beat the Indian *dhobies* in the results they produce: this has always seemed to me impossible. That the latter have no conscience on some points I have proved, but neither are the others immaculate.

Among clever people, the thieves of India may be said to take first rank in their own line. Never mind what they do, it is done *ne plus ultra*. What is beyond them in the light-fingered way has, I should say, yet to be devised.

A man may go to bed between a pair of sheets and wake up without them. Nothing disturbed him, nor was he restless; he is not dreaming now, and he feels quite as usual, so he can't have been drugged. Certainly not for such a trifle as that. He was only tapped and patted by some of the most delicate finger-tips in the world, and every time he shifted and stirred sleepily a decisive, if tiny, pull was given to the under sheet. It only took patience on the part of the thief, and little by little it was drawn away. The top one he merely had to lift off before leaving.

But supposing matters have been made more difficult, so

that the thief's errand is likely to take a good while, then the victim must be prevented from waking too soon, and they know what to do. Probably his windows are fitted not with glass, but with *jilmies*. These *jilmies* are a sort of venetian-blind, opening and shutting by means of a stick down the middle, the fastening of which, though inside, can be manœuvred, and lend themselves very nicely to the thieves' methods. A long bamboo with a rag steeped in some narcotic tied on to the end can be easily pushed through the one handiest for the sleeper's face, and held close against his mouth and nose for a few seconds. No fear now of his waking even if fireworks were let off at his ears. Very likely he will oversleep himself, but that is the extent of the harm done, barring the being lightened of a few of his belongings. These may have been hooked out with the ever-useful bamboo—one equipped for the purpose—this being the plan best adapted for the abstraction of clothes. To compass the theft the more safely, most likely the servants and peons stretched on their mats outside their master's doors, or lying about in the verandahs, have also been given a sniff of something quieting. Even if grasped the thieves are not to be held; for they oil themselves well before starting on their jaunt, though a friend of ours did once capture one, and kept him by the help of fish-hooks in his hair! That was the only European I ever knew to be upsides with a bazaar thief.

The theft of clothes is common, but as those of a European would be no use to natives themselves, it follows that there must be a market for such goods.

CHAPTER XII

Government order for general vaccination—Order rescinded—Lepers—Country leprosy—Cholera.

At one time when smallpox was especially virulent throughout F.'s district, The Wynâd then, orders were issued by the Government that every one should be vaccinated. Centres had to be arranged at which the people might assemble for this purpose. This was only accomplished after endless obstacles and difficulties of all kinds had been met, for there was a strong prejudice against vaccination. I don't think we were altogether free from it ourselves, but there was no resisting stringent Government orders. Every coffee planter in the district, far and near, was to see that his hundreds of coolies duly presented themselves. With estate muster-rolls this was possible, but it was not so easy to get hold of the scattered units of the general population in outlying parts.

By dint of careful planning and proper organisation the business had, however, been put in train for some weeks. A letter in English from a native Forest subordinate which I remember hearing quoted described the method about to be used. He wrote that they intended to 'persuade by force'; and I don't doubt that by means of it many a struggling wretch was dragged to the operating station against his will.

It had been arranged that all under Forest jurisdiction within a certain radius should be vaccinated in our compound, for the convenience of the division and to ensure every person being included; not a single one was to be

allowed to escape, which all—at least all the natives—were bent upon doing.

Great preparations had been made by our servants for the feeding of these crowds, who were frightened to death at the prospect before them, and now the dreaded day had come; the compound was thronged; everything was in readiness, and the doctor and his Eurasian assistants had arrived from the hospital.

Our system of vaccination might be new to these people, but not the idea of inoculating one disease in order to combat or forestall another. That is centuries old, and they were familiar with its attendant dangers; it was, in fact, the thought of those dangers that now so terrified them. 'Well took physic, fell sick, and died' is a saying that might be remembered sometimes to much advantage. We, too, had heard hideous stories of disease contracted through tainted lymph, but we were assured that all precautions had been taken, and that the vaccine was of the purest, for the children and calves from which it was procured had been under medical observation. All that we had to take on trust. In any case, there was no escape, and the fateful moment had arrived. F. offered himself first, as an encouragement to the shrinking creatures around; in another few minutes the doctor would have begun and finished with him. My turn would have come next, I suppose, then that of the household servants, and so on, till the entire compoundful of people had been rendered immune from small-pox at any rate, had not a totally unexpected interruption now occurred. First a sound of galloping hoofs approaching broke upon the ears of the assembled people, and in another moment a couple of horsemen showed themselves tearing up the hill, frantically waving papers in their right hands. As they neared they were seen to be white with dust and their faces livid and colourless, so hard had they ridden in order to be in time *to stop the vaccination*! Their errand

was soon told. It had been discovered that the vaccine lymph about to be used had come from *the most leprous village* in Southern India! The message was delivered just in time—not an instant to spare; an accident to man or horse, an extra drink of water on the road—the veriest trifle—and some of us would have been surely doomed to the most awful fate on earth. But those two fine fellows were not chosen at haphazard; they knew what was wanted of them; their orders were to ride like the wind, to save lives; to eat and drink riding; to stop for nothing; above all, *to be in time.*

I cannot now remember with how many changes of horses these men had covered mile after mile at unslackening gallop, over any sort of ground, and roads that, as we knew, were like dry watercourses; nor how long or short a time their desperate ride took them; but I know that they fulfilled their mission grandly, nearly falling out of their saddles with fatigue as they pulled up at their appointed goal. Nor were they forgetful of the good horses that had served them so well; for we heard them give the *syces* who were leading the spent animals away a rapid word of caution not to water them directly, only to rinse out their mouths and bathe their faces, legs, and feet, till they should cool down a little. They had not thought of themselves, but F. saw that all was provided for their comfort and rest. The men were Mussulmanis—high-bred, finely strung—whose endurance would give out only with death. Our feelings towards them are not to be described. Besides ourselves, all those hundreds, aye, thousands, of men, women, and children, even the tiny babies, were all to have been subjected to the same deadly risk, if not certainty, of contracting one of the most horrific diseases from which man can suffer.

I was for heaping presents on these men: gold watches and chains—possessions in which they would especially

glory—to begin with ; but F. said there must not be a hint of such a thing. That they would not go unrewarded he knew ; the Government would see to it ; then, with permission, we might add our personal gifts to show our gratitude. And so it came about.

What first led the authorities to suspect the source of the vaccine for our division I do not know, but their action showed that they were on the alert, and thus a widespread calamity was averted. Subsequent investigation proved to the hilt that that village was a forcing-bed of leprosy in an awful form, but it was not allowed to exist as one much longer. The dwellings were burnt, all the animals were destroyed, and every person affected—strange to say, some were not—was deported to one of the leper establishments, of which there are several scattered up and down India. The neighbouring villages were strictly searched, but as they had held no communication with the one where leprosy was rife, no signs of it were found in them. At the same time, we wondered at the callousness or philosophy with which the people endured such proximity. As in regard to the crocodiles of Poolpadi, it was evidently familiarity that had engendered contempt. It is the same with those who can calmly dwell on the slopes of a volcano, ignoring the danger.

Leprosy has been conserved by generations of unchecked transmission ; its primary cause is bad water, that mother of many kindred ills, including elephantiasis and the guinea-worm, of which more anon. It was common enough, at any rate, on the west coast, which was the part of India best known to us.

It is still a question whether leprosy be infectious or not ; contagious it certainly is, and also hereditary. I have been told that it is allied to tuberculosis, yet while the latter is freely spoken of and written about in England, no word is ever breathed there of the former, as far as I know. In

these days at least; but I have an old *Historical Magazine* for 1790, which says, taking its facts and quoting from *Hutchinson's History, etc., of Durham*:—

'The leprosy was much more common in this part of the globe formerly than at present, and, perhaps, near half the hospitals that were in England were for lepers. At the five gates of Norwich were five houses of this sort; and lepers were so numerous in the twelfth century that by a decree in the Lateran Council, under Pope Alexander III., 1179, they were empowered to erect churches for themselves and to have ministers (lepers, we may suppose) to officiate in them. This shows at once how infectious and offensive their distemper was; and on this account in England, "where a man was a leper, and dwelling in a town, and would come into the church, or among his neighbours, where they have assembled, to talk with them to their annoyance or disturbance, a writ lay *de leproso amovendo*."

'What follows is remarkable. The writ is for those lepers who appear in the sight of all men that they are lepers, by their voice and sores, the putrefaction of their flesh, and by the smell of them. And so late as the reign of Edward the Sixth multitudes of lepers seem to have been in England; for in 1 Edward VI. c. 3, in which directions are given for carrying the poor to the places where they were born, etc., we read the following clause:—"Provided always that all leprous and poor bed-rid creatures may, at their liberty, remain and continue in such houses appointed for lepers or bed-rid people as they now lie in."'

The leprosy from which we were all rescued that day was the kind which eats the flesh and corrodes the bones; creeping on gradually, not to be arrested till the poor body becomes one running sore from head to foot, drying off, and sloughing away till no flesh remains but what hangs in shreds. Hair, teeth, nails, and every feature gone, with no semblance of a face left, the victim yet lives on, often for years; not always suffering, but abhorrent to himself and to all others save a self-chosen band, who may truly be numbered among the 'noble army of martyrs.'

Such a leper we once saw from the window of a very slow-moving train. A man was passing along, not far off,

hurriedly but carefully bearing the ghastly object thrown across his shoulder. F. saw it first, and hastily pointed out of the opposite window at anything or nothing to divert my attention, but he was just too late by a second: the sight was, indeed, enough to haunt one ever after, and it made us feel quite sick. The fact itself seemed unaccountable till we learned that a hospital for lepers had been started in the neighbourhood by some nuns, an old fortress perched high on a hill having been converted into a convent for this purpose. Far from appreciating the boon, the relatives of those they succoured sometimes stole them away, as perhaps in the present instance.

Nature is said to have her antidote for every poison, her remedy for every disease. Her cure for leprosy has not as yet been discovered. Such a quest would seem a more worthy employment for great intellects than the devising of engines of destruction and death. That cure, perhaps, lies in the direction of radium.

I have seen the afflicted creatures in the great leper hospital—colony, rather—at the French settlement of Pondicherry. They were behind walls so high that one could see over them only from such a place as that in which I was then living, namely, a roof-house; not the roof of a house, merely, but a suite of rooms on the roof—a very coveted suite it was, too. This commanded a view of both the buildings—for men and for women—and of the park-like grounds surrounding them, with their green expanse of grass, water-lilied ponds, and shady avenues. About it the poor things crept or crawled; amongst them moved the sisters of mercy, self-doomed volunteers in a forlorn hope, for no one who enters through the gates may ever pass back into the world again. The cemetery also is within. The community receives a grant from the French Government.

It seems to me now, as it did then, when in the fulness of my own health and strength I watched that quiet scene,

that the self-immolation of those sisters and brethren, and of their comrades devoted to the same work in other places, transcends in sublimity all there is, or can be, of heroism in the world. In its very hopelessness lies the grandeur of this self-sacrifice. 'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che entrate' is surely deeply graven on the portals of these tombs of the living; but it is something more than an earthly hope that first impels these men and women to a life among sights and sounds and odours repulsive to every sense, and then sustains them in their labour of love, though it lead on to an almost certain fate terrible to contemplate.

Of Father Damien, the hero-martyr of Molokai (the Leper Island) we have all heard; yet there are hundreds such as he—an army of nameless ones—and if any fall out of the ranks there are ever others eager to step in: the supply amply meets the demand.

One hears talk of 'fallen' human nature; I have often marvelled at the *heights* to which it rises. If opportunity make criminals, so also does it make very saints and angels of mercy. St. Elizabeths and Father Damiens there have always been, and always will be, for we find them all down the centuries.

Missionaries, explorers, and others of enterprising spirit go bravely and boldly enough into all manner of holes and corners of the earth, carrying their lives in their hands, together with the lives of those who are paid to follow them; they may or they may not come out alive. These others yield up their lives in advance; they do more, they embrace a death in life—touched, indeed, with the fire 'from off the altar.'

Besides the awful form of leprosy generally understood by the word, there is another comparatively harmless, though offensive enough to the eyes; at any rate, to those of Europeans. It causes neither bodily suffering nor even discomfort; nor is it infectious, for Roman Catholic

priests, Salvation Army evangelists, and mission people generally, who in their quiet heroism go unshrinkingly everywhere, rarely contract this, the ordinary leprosy of the country.[1]

I believe it to be no more than leucoderma (white skin), a diseased condition of the skin, in which there is a deficiency of colouring matter, but which is harmless and unimportant; to the eye it consists of palish blotches, showing up in a startling manner on a dark skin. Sometimes it occurs merely in spots; sometimes almost the entire body is covered. I have seen it myself in one or two instances when no brown at all was visible, only that dreadful sickly hue; most dreadful in appearance, but, as I have said, not in the least painful; nor does it disqualify the subjects of it in their business. The children of such persons may or may not be thus marked.

It happened once that some mat-makers had been sent for to fit rattan matting all over a bungalow we had just taken. I saw them coming along under their twenty to thirty-foot sheaves of springy cane; amongst them were several 'piebalds,' who had large pinkish-white patches on their brown bodies. It gave me quite a turn, and I said as much to the servants, who assured me that there was nothing the matter with the men that could affect other people; 'only country leprosy' they called it, evidently having no prejudices against it personally. Nevertheless, so unpleasant did they look to me that I gave orders they should be paid their day's wage, and asked to change themselves for others of one colour all over. They were not the least offended at the request, and laying down their bundles (which I would rather they had taken with them) salaamed and retired, much marvelling doubtless, but looking jubilant at being paid for doing nothing! The others,

[1] *Compare* Matt. xxv. 6. *Simon's leprosy must have been of this harmless sort.*

however, who, being of a good wholesome brown, were retained to work, seemed so much aggrieved that they were promised double wages. At this turn of affairs they set to work with a will, and became quite chatty, laughing amongst themselves as at a very good joke.

The work of these men interested me greatly, and I stood watching their deft fingers so doubling and twisting the damped pliant canes as to fit perfectly into every corner and crevice and recess, even the very smallest, without leaving an inch of bare floor visible anywhere, no matter what shape the rooms might be. They never looked up for an instant, but went on plaiting and weaving and fitting inch by inch, adding yard to yard—in a pattern, too—each man's work meeting his neighbour's and dovetailing into it as if by magic, a little sharp knife their only tool.

Their joke lasted them all that day, and when paying-time came it seemed almost too much for them. While they were working such behaviour passed for mirth, but they knew it was not respectful to laugh in my presence afterwards, and tried to hide behind each other discreetly. As a rule, it is not well to be inquisitive about what natives may be jabbering and making merry over, but there was something about these people that I could not resist having them asked what was amusing them so much. It was this, that those men with the pale patches on their skin should have been sent away on full wages, whilst they who remained received double money. They were all just the same; in some the patches showed outwardly, in others they did not. In proof of this they would, if I liked, bring me their children to see. All were lepers together, and it was so very funny for the *Dursani* to want to *pay* people for that sort of thing! They missed my point entirely, and I as certainly missed theirs, for I saw nothing amusing about it, nor did I wish for an exhibition of their children. After the account they gave of themselves I objected to having

any of their handiwork in the house, but F. said that that was being altogether too fanciful. Every one's house was matted by these people, who lived in a community of their own, not because they were lepers, but because they were mat-weavers. That sort of leprosy was not catching, and mattered nothing to anybody, nor did they mind it themselves (as, indeed, I had gathered from their light-heartedness); and this seemed to be the general view. Though these people are not shunned by others, they intermarry only with each other, and thus perpetuate their variegated breed. Later on, happening to pass near their village, Ferook, I saw numerous little specimens running about, and was afterwards glad to have done so, for it was the fearing too sad a sight that had made me shrink from seeing them before. Now that fear was set at rest; they were neither sick nor sorry, and as nimble and sturdy as any other little *butchas*.[1]

More or less cholera, equally with smallpox and leprosy, exists everywhere in India. A strange thing about it is that if it begin with the native population, it confines its ravages to natives in that particular locality. So well known is this fact that Europeans drive fearlessly through stricken districts and their crowded bazaars. But, strange to say, should Europeans be the first to be attacked, natives succumb to it as well. Why this should be so one cannot say; that such is the case has been remarked on every outbreak of the epidemic, which runs a similar course each time.

[1] *Butcha*, Hindustani for child.

CHAPTER XIII

Elephantiasis—Guinea-worm—Rainfall—Showers of fish—An exceptional season—An uninvited guest—Panthers in The Wynâd—Pony and panther—Commotion in kennel—Helmet bird—Strange dishes.

ELEPHANTIASIS is supposed to be a form of leprosy, though of a different aspect, and unaccompanied by any pain; but it is, in fact, hardly less dreadful, for the person afflicted with it cannot move about much more freely. The affected limb, generally a leg, puts on a diseased growth of the skin, and gradually becomes enormously thick, till at length it assumes the very size and appearance of an elephant's leg from the toes upwards; hence the name. The knee and ankle joints can still be bent very slightly in moving, but neither ankle nor instep are discernible; the toes grow to be exactly like those of an elephant, with the nails turning downwards; the limb slowly but surely takes on the self-same colouring, a dark ash occasionally pink and blotchy, and the surface becomes hard and corrugated till the very counterpart of an elephant's leg is presented to the eye.

A servant of ours—one of the best—had such a leg and foot. When we were engaging him he asked if there were children to be attended to, or stairs in our house, as if either were so he was not fitted for the work. Neither being the case, and we unlikely to change our house, he entered our service as butler. Beyond a slowness in walking, owing to the awful weight he carried, there was little difference to be noticed between him and another. This weight, he told us, sometimes tried him, and caused a general feeling of uneasiness in that limb, but he had become used to it,

as it had taken years to attain its present shape and size, and he did not suffer pain. Nervous, fanciful people might have objected to such a servant, and to the sight of his foot, or rather to the little bit of it that was visible under the closely-setting white petticoat worn by household servants and some other classes in Malabar (where we then were), their dress consisting of a straight piece of muslin wound several times round the waist and reaching to the ankle, with a white calico jacket above. The man was a native of the west coast, where elephantiasis is fearfully common.

A poor woman whom we saw most days squatting over her baskets of fruit in the bazaar had an arm affected in the same way. As far as it is possible for an arm to be like a leg, hers was like an elephant's. This poor creature had a double weight to carry, for to get along at all without falling over she was obliged to be balanced on the other side. The awful growth and dark discoloration began from her shoulder, which was unaffected. The joint of the elbow could be bent slightly, like those of the leg and ankle I have mentioned. The bones are not touched by the disease, which is entirely in the skin and immediately beneath it.

Sometimes the face is the part affected. Though the disease does not of itself destroy the eyesight or the organs of smell, hearing, speech, etc., yet the skin grows and thickens round them in such a way as to produce much the same result. Though the afflicted person's eyes are uninjured he cannot use them, for the lids become so thick as to be almost fixed, the cheek below meeting them, it may be on one side only, it may be on both. So, too, with the ears, nose, mouth—all are rendered useless, so overlaid is each feature with this unspeakably dreadful growth. His speech is unintelligible; to take nourishment, except in liquid form, is sometimes impossible to him from inability to move the jaws sufficiently to masticate; he is well-nigh helpless.

Notwithstanding all this, the poor creatures linger on for years. One cannot but wonder what purpose in the general scheme of things such martyrdoms can serve.

I have said that this almost grotesque disease is attributed to bad water, but as every one drinks the same water, and only a small proportion of the people are so affected, the explanation seems inadequate, taken by itself. All Europeans have their drinking water filtered, as a matter of course, or even distilled, as we did when at Coimbatore. Some few advanced natives do so too, but the filtering is very commonly only nominal unless personally supervised; yet, as far as I am aware, no European was ever known to contract elephantiasis, and the cause, I fancy, is to be sought in the blood, and most probably a leprous taint in those who become its victims.

Salt-fish, eaten in the large quantity it is by natives, is said to be the contributory cause of elephantiasis, and also the origin of guinea-worm—another repulsive disease that afflicts the inhabitants of India, and other tropical countries as well. I have known two instances of Englishmen in India suffering from this scourge.

The guinea-worm is a parasite that burrows in the flesh. Usually, in the beginning, a slight uneasiness is felt, say on the instep; then the skin breaks, and the head of the worm appears. The way to deal with it is to wind off daily as much as can be drawn from the place upon a reel which is kept bound to it, taking great care not to break the length, for if broken it would start back, and all have to be done over again, perhaps in some entirely fresh part; whereas, by good fortune and the exercise of care and patience, the entire worm may be thus removed. Even then the process may sometimes extend over years. Happy is the victim of this malady if it occur on a part of his body that he can reach, for then he is able himself to give it the unwearying attention required in order to get rid of it. It does not necessarily

prevent him from pursuing his business, whatever that may be, but it keeps him for ever on his guard lest a chance touch should knock down that cure-edifice which he has been building up, maybe during many a patient month, round that dreadful reel—a veritable torture-toy of Nature's.

Though I don't claim for the west coast that it has a monopoly of this sort of thing, the east coast is generally more healthy, being drier, and not coming within the influence of the south-west monsoon blowing from the vast cauldron of the Indian Ocean. Great heat and damp combined for long together bring about conditions favourable to skin and other diseases. Doubtless the Madras side has its own peculiarities and disadvantages, but of these I had little personal experience.

The rainfall on the southern portion of the west coast would suffice to water the entire peninsula if evenly distributed. Superabundant here, totally lacking elsewhere, could some man of science contrive a comprehensive system of irrigation by which the water supply should be thus equalised, he would serve his own and later generations far better than by the most brilliant success in the art of aviation, which is now absorbing so many of the keenest intellects.

For five years we were stationed at Coimbatore, a place —inland and easterly—where two inches or two and a half inches for the whole year were considered quite a good rainfall, the usual amount being under two. There, when we scented the delicious fragrance of rain in the air, of wind blowing over damp earth, and the first drops began to fall, we literally stood out of doors to be sprinkled; rejoicing, too, in the knowledge of what that rain was about to do for the land.

In Calcutta, after a heavy shower, fish are sometimes found strewn on the ground and upon the flat roofs, deposited by rain-clouds which have drawn them up from swollen

rivers. I have never seen that myself, but another somewhat similar and very pretty sight I have seen in the Deccan. The ground would be covered with exquisitely beautiful insects—spiders of some kind—with soft plush-like bodies of vivid scarlet, about the size of a cherry stone, but flatter; they reddened the earth, so thickly did they lie about. I sometimes wondered whether they could be ordinary insects chemically turned red by the action of the rain-water; for, the shower over, one saw no more of them to notice.

Rain, as known in the tropics, cannot be rightly imagined by those who have not seen it. It is a very wall or sheet of water, lowered and lowered, hour after hour, day after day, sometimes week after week. For six weeks in succession have I known rain of that tropical sort to fall continuously; if it stopped at all during that time it was at night, for it certainly did not do so by day for so much as half an hour. One night it surpassed itself; without storm or sound it steadily descended, and in the morning the rain-gauges were found to register twenty-four inches for the twelve hours! That was phenomenal, and happened at Tellicherry, on the west coast; only to be beaten at Cherapoonji, in Northern India, which has the greatest rainfall in India, if not in the world.

The year of that night of rain was a disastrous one, and was long remembered for its consequences—devastation by floods, the bursting of dams, the annihilation of villages, the destruction of the people's very livelihood by the drowning of their animals. Of these many were also to be seen lying dead from exposure on the roadside or in the grazing pastures. The very crows fell off the trees, so drenched with the rain and cramped with cold were they.

The place—Manantavadi,[1] in The Wynâd—where we were then living was some two thousand five hundred feet or more above sea-level, and to make it comfortable for people

[1] Generally pronounced Manantoddy.

who were better used to a temperature of ninety degrees in the shade, fires had to be kept up for quite six months every year, let alone this exceptional one.

One morning, not far from the bungalow, F. came upon a panther, on his very path, all but dead from starvation, and killed it in sheer pity for its wasted condition. Our people brought in two, and a fourth they found more dead than alive, famished and spiritless with misery; all four in the space of a week!

There was much unreclaimed forest and scrub in the neighbourhood, and the wild things that inhabited it suffered frightfully from the continuous cold and wet, which seemed to alter all the accustomed conditions of their lives, and it was at this time that we got up one morning to find that we had unawares entertained as a guest during the night a panther, who had adventured his precious but most miserable self under our roof—anything for shelter—curling himself up on a sofa in the verandah!

This verandah was a closed-in one, with windows round three sides, and a very rough door, never shutting properly, which, being made of unseasoned planks, shrank in the dry and swelled in the wet weather, in this matching the rest of this special habitation, so that we looked for nothing better, nor sought to remedy it. Hence the distressed creature, finding no hindrance, crept in, enticed by the warmth, and perhaps the chance of a bite of food—emboldened or, it may be, tamed by stress of misery.

When the dogs were let out they tore about the place like mad things, baying and whining in deafening chorus, and would have dragged the sofa to pieces, only we shut them out of the verandah as we wanted to look round first.

The dried muddy pugs were quite distinctly recognisable for those of a full-grown panther; the sofa rug and a flannel coat of F.'s were damp where they had been lain on, and were covered, too, with a quantity of jet-black hairs,

proving that this special panther was one of the rarest and most beautiful of the species; and very strange it was that just then a large reward was being offered by the Government for a specimen, dead or alive, of a black panther.

The animal had doubtless taken himself off at the first streak of dawn, very much the better for his good square meal and warm night's rest. Perhaps, with an eye to repeating the experiment, he had not gone very far either; but most surely no harm should have befallen him under our roof, he having 'eaten our salt' in the form of dog biscuits, which we felt quite glad should have been left in his way overnight, and of which just a remnant remained to prove that he could eat no more.

A panther coming to the bungalow thus for food and shelter was a very unusual and incautious act on the part of one of the wariest of animals, only showing him to have been at his wits' end for a living. He would be used to a certain amount of wet and cold, the monsoon being heavy here as compared with some places, but this was an exceptional season—not a dry inch anywhere—and all the denizens of the forest were suffering.

For six weeks we tasted no bread, except what was home-made, as the road was impassable for the coolies upon whom we depended for some of our supplies. They had thirty miles to travel to the nearest stores, and the few Europeans in the place joined in a sort of club to send for things in this way every fortnight. Neither could we have potatoes; as a substitute we ate, and thankfully, the boiled seeds of the jack fruit,[1] which are not unlike chestnuts in taste.

This district was at all times and in all parts what we called a 'panthery' region. The native town of Mananta-

[1] *Artocarpus integrifolia*, a native of the Indian Archipelago, cultivated in Southern India. The fruit is a favourite article of food with the natives, as are the roasted seeds.

vadi, which was the seat of Government locally, lay in the low flat land between surrounding and isolated low hills, and consisted of one irregular street with countless alleys. All around was the ubiquitous *Lantana*, forming by its thick growth a very nursery for young panthers.

There were four European bungalows besides the hospital: one for the doctor and his household; one for the Superintendent of Police; one for the District Magistrate; and one for the Forest Officer.

Each bungalow was perched on the summit of its own hill, and apart from the gardens; very little more of the jungle was cleared round it than enough to make it approachable by a carriage drive, or maybe by only a bridle-path. The 'carriage drives' were as far removed as possible from the idea that word usually conveys. They were steep, stony, narrow, winding; nothing to mind, however, when used to them.

I had been 'tiffing' with the doctor's wife, and was riding leisurely home one evening after dark, the *syce* walking ahead with a lantern, when I fancied I smelt a panther. I was not sure, however, and my pony's quicker senses were beforehand with me. Without the least warning he simply laid legs to the ground, took a bee-line for his stable, and *tore* home, the *syce* being nowhere. That pony knew all the short cuts, and took them. Though not anything of a rider, I had learnt the knack of sticking on, but the difficulty now was not so much that as to keep myself from being dragged off by the strong overhanging boughs, some of which were thorny and clinging. The monsoon being in, all vegetation was at its thickest growth; indeed, only by going in this headlong fashion could I have got through at all. The ground was full of holes and puddles, but little recked my pony of such trifles; on he flew, while the panther, doubtless, was going just as fast in an opposite direction, but I had not had enough experience to be sure

of it in those days, and I had no mind to be left behind. At length the home lights appeared, and all danger from the panther was at an end, but with 'Charlie' heading straight for his stable at full pelt it was all I could do to avoid being brained in passing through the wickedly low doorway by burying my face in his mane. We were both scratched and bleeding, and it took some time, and a good deal of bread and sugar, before the terrified little animal was soothed and quieted.

The panthers, however, though not usually aggressive, were sometimes pretty bold, and would even snatch a dog from off the very doorstep if not prevented. This happened once to my knowledge, and the dog's rescue was miraculous.

It was near the dinner hour—eight o'clock—at the bungalow of a coffee planter and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. N., friends of ours, who lived about twelve miles from where we were. He and she, as very usual at that hour, were bathing and dressing. The servants were laying the table in the dining-room, which opened on a wide verandah, having a deep flight of ten or more steps leading into the garden. Crotons and various other large shrubs grew round about, but nothing to be considered as cover. Lights there were in plenty on all sides.

Several dogs lay taking their ease in the verandah, and one had stretched herself on a step, not far down, and quite within the light. Her a lurking panther dared to seize, and was making off with, without a sound from either, under the very eyes of the servants, one of whom, however, saw what was happening, and raised the outcry which brought master and mistress upon the scene. That something had happened to Dido they could just make out amid the din of cries and anathemas on the marauder that ensued. Before this time Mr. N. would simply have stared at the idea of leaving his room apparelled in a bath-sheet, but such was the preoccupation of every mind at the

moment that, as we were told afterwards, he actually did so on this occasion, armed with a rifle, when, lo and behold! a few yards from the bottom step lay the gasping, half-choked, but unhurt Dido, her collar beside her! It was evident that the panther must have caught her up by it, and, what with the weight and the leather being probably worn thin, it gave way at the buckle, so setting the dog free, for she had not so much as a tooth-mark on her! The only pity was that the scene could not be snapshotted.

It was no rare occurrence, however, for dogs to be carried off, without hope of a miracle, if loose after four o'clock, or farther away than beside one's chair. Invasion of the kennel was even attempted, and after one such fright, when it had a reasonably strong thatched roof, we had this replaced by tiles, and we, and the dogs too, slept in peace; till one night when a very bold, hungry panther clambered on to it and began clawing his way inside. Needless to say, the inmates raised such a bedlam as woke every one about the place, and he was glad to take himself off as quickly as possible, leaving a claw or two behind. Lucky for him that F. was away!

It was at Manantavadi that we once had a whole afternoon's amusement and interest watching the gambols of a couple of panther cubs, sitting the while in our verandah and looking across to the opposite hillside, no great distance away. The hills being scarcely more than eminences, only a few hundred yards lay between their playground and our bungalow. These little creatures played with each other's tails, and rolled over and over, exactly like kittens, without a touch of malice or savagery—all was pure mischief and fun. Very young, they were just fat round things, with fuzzy, yellowish-grey coats; not sleek as yet, nor had the tawny colour and distinct black rosettes even begun to appear. There was nothing as yet of the lithe, cruel grace of the panther-form—only rounded baby limbs. Their

mother could not have been far off, but we neither saw nor heard anything of her till quite late, when the two babies had romped and tumbled themselves tired, and were lying on their sides, paws in air, after the manner of kittens. Then a deep sharp note or call from somewhere we did hear, very different from the harsh roar we knew so well when it echoed through the jungle. The cubs were keen to hear it too; they scrambled to their feet and scampered off, tails on end.

A panther's usual note so exactly resembles the sound of wood being sawn in a sawpit (which gives a hollowness and depth) that one may easily be mistaken for the other. The same may be said of the cry of the Great Toucan or helmet bird—so called from the bony black headpiece jutting over its eyes; but as this is uttered chiefly when flying, and consequently dies away speedily, it can be recognised for what it is without difficulty, though not at first hearing.

Speaking of these huge birds, I remember an occasion when one had been shot and the wings given to me. They are yellowish-white in colour, being pure yellow as to the shoulders and a few of the feathers. These wings were soiled and tumbled, so I had them washed. To my intense surprise, when the first rinsing water was changed the next became yellow immediately, and the longer the wings remained in it the deeper yellow it became. Drawing a quill, I found it full at the base of a dark orange colouring matter, thick like a paste, which, mingling with the water, tinted it and the feathers immersed in it of a pure, pale, and varying yellow. We thought it an extraordinarily artificial arrangement on the part of Dame Nature.

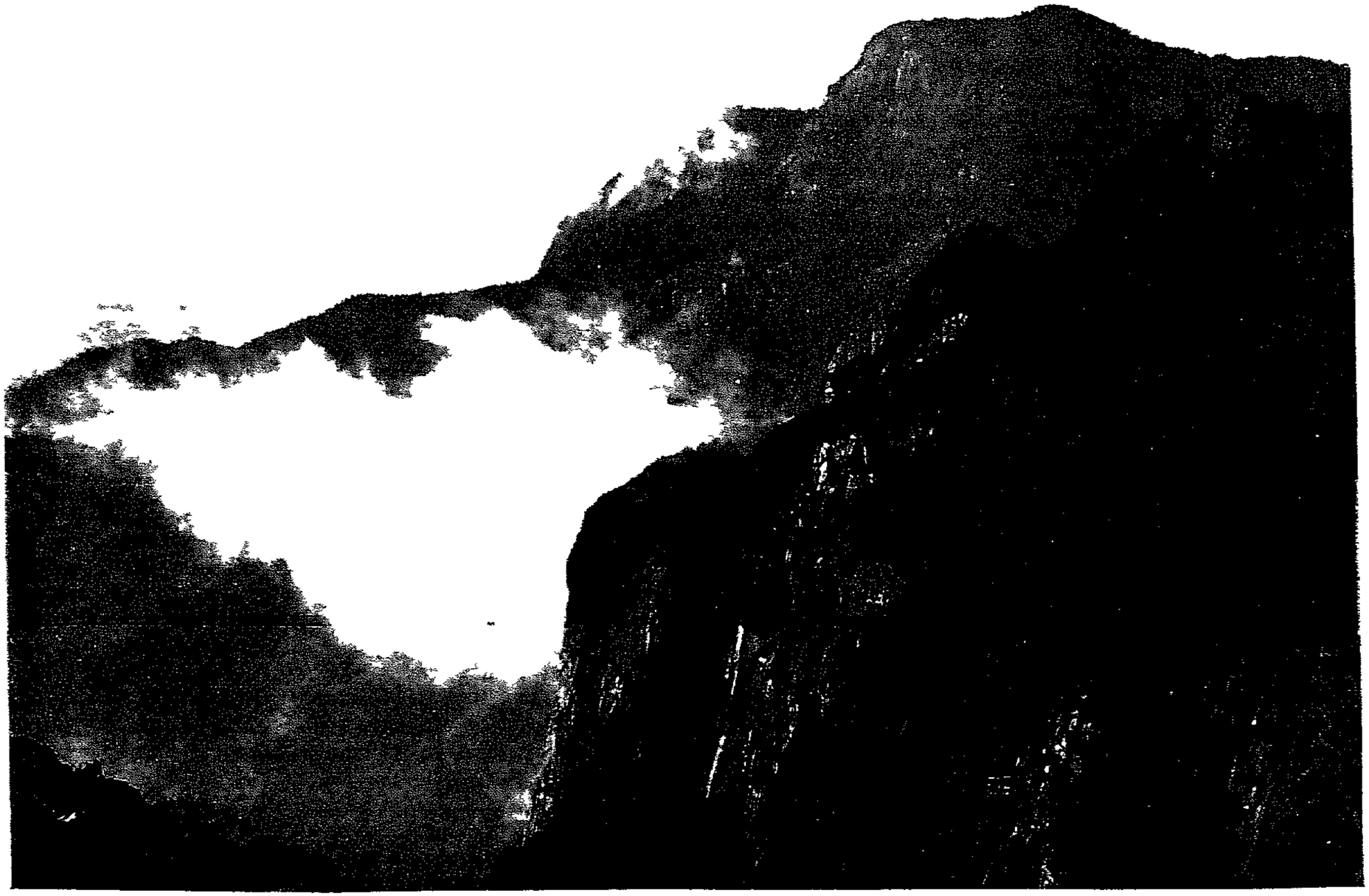
The flight of these rather ugly birds is a very clumsy one; they may be seen flopping and tumbling as though they were learning the art, but, nevertheless, they can go along at a great rate.

We had the specimen I have mentioned cooked, wishing to taste it, for we were of an inquisitive turn and in the habit of testing the qualities of most things; however, it proved rank and beefy, though the bird is a fruit and grain feeder.

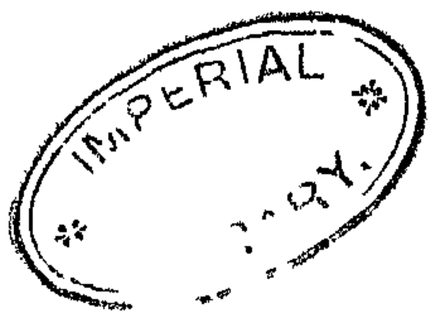
Among the meats that we made trial of I should place bison hump first and foremost as a delicacy; followed closely by bison marrow and bison oxtail soup; also the jelly made from the feet.

We have dined enjoyably, too, off a slice of elephant rib. Though rather stringy, it was not tough, and for taste might have been either mutton or beef. Wild venison and wild pork were, I need hardly say, excellent. Hares, too, there were in plenty for those who liked them; but after once seeing a hare's interior I never even wanted one in the house again, so infested was it with parasites. I learned that that particular hare was not peculiar—all are the same. Rabbits do not exist wild in India, and no one keeps them as pets (for fattening and future slaying!) as in England.

We also tasted the milk of an elephant—one of the tame ones, as all would understand. It proved to be the very contrary to what one might imagine as necessary for the sustenance of a sturdy elephant calf, being thin and bluish, looking no better than skim milk and water, and tasting like that. Bison milk was, of course, unobtainable, but is probably very much the same as that of any other cow. The milk of the ibex or wild goat we tested, and only wished it were always to be had, for it must surely be the richest of all, being like cream itself, and quite delicious! The opportunity of trying it was afforded us during a long and important tour, the object of which was capturing ibex alive, in enormous nets, for shipment home as gifts to the Zoological Gardens. In this F. was entirely successful, and never a one hurt among them. While in our keeping these wild things became as docile as our own goats, running to call at milking-time as they did.



The Haunt of the Ibex


IMPERIAL

CHAPTER XIV

Manantavadi and malaria—Experimental Garden—Products—A clever thief—Blacksmith-jeweller—A silver chain—System of payment—Wild mangoes—Gold and gold craze.

THAT my recollections of The Wynâd are not all pleasant will be understood when I mention that it was at Manantavadi that I first learned by personal experience the meaning of fever and ague.

At that time the place had an evil and well-deserved reputation for malaria, the reason for which was not far to seek. Swamps abounded; there was one to every hill; but when we took up our abode there F. was not long in having ours drained by planting it with health-breathing eucalyptus, the spongy roots of which act as suckers and do the work thoroughly. By degrees other swamps were similarly treated, and a different state of things introduced. On the first day of clearing our place, by way of an inauguration scene, a huge boar, whose lair it was, caused some commotion; but in the end he got the worst of it. Presently on the site of the noisome swamp a garden was made, and the waters were utilised by directing them into channels to be stored against the hot, rainless months. More than a mere garden, this developed into the 'Horticultural Experimental Gardens,' where all manner of interesting things were done in the way of trials with foreign plants, flowers, and fruits. It was, indeed, a most comprehensive place—a nursery for many kinds of vegetables, rarities, and curiosities.

The vanilla vines were especially absorbing. Quite a

respectable quantity of perfectly cured beans grown here were sent, some to Madras, some home, by F. One point in their previous treatment I remember, namely, their being soaked in sweet oil to keep them moist, and to extract, while at the same time retaining, their distinctive, exquisite aroma.

Tobacco, too, was there. The flowers of this Indian variety, unlike the original American stock, and the cultivated English-garden plant, are quite small, and pink and white in colour; not anything like so beautiful to look at, but fully as fragrant, so that our patch of them was a veritable joy.

The experiment of cultivating this tobacco ended, as it was meant to do—in smoke; for men who understood the work came from Trichinopoly to do the curing and rolling into cheroots [1] (here we did not call them cigars) after the manner of 'Trichies,' a sort which it takes a well-seasoned smoker to appreciate, as they are very strong. Trichies have a special shape of their own, being large and tapering, and cut off square at each end, and have a reed through them, which is supposed to make them 'draw' better.

Besides the work being all part of his profession, F. delighted in the garden, and was in it morning, noon, and night. One of his experiments had a rather curious development.

The idea occurred to him of trying to acclimatise ipecacuanha,[2] and having procured seedlings—no difficulties in such matters ever daunting him—he succeeded in rearing healthy plants. The experiment was carried out entirely on his own initiative, and he finally made a present of his results to the Indian Government, wrote a pamphlet stating that, in his opinion, the experiment would be an advantageous one to follow up, and gave full directions for the obtaining of seedlings, their culture, and the sort of ground necessary for

[1] Anglicised form of Tamil word, *shuruttu*, a roll.
[2] South America is the natural habitat of this plant.

their growth; in fact, all particulars according to his own procedure.

Whether he received any acknowledgment at the time I forget; but a few months afterwards the Government, through its Forest Department, issued orders directing all Forest Officers to start upon the trial cultivation of ipecacuanha forthwith; and forwarded to each a copy of my husband's pamphlet, with the comment that its most valuable contents and information were only lately to hand; adding, moreover, that as an incentive to zeal on the part of the officers concerned, a reward would be assigned to the first man successful! This communication was received in due course by F., who, though in the beginning he had very likely been vexed at the slighting notice taken of his action, had long forgotten it, and could now afford to laugh. He simply wrote up again, through his chief, the Conservator of Forests, claiming the 'valuable' pamphlet as his own, and forwarding photographs of his plants, now thriving as established facts in the Experimental Garden.

How this pamphlet came to be printed without his name at the bottom was a mystery then, and remained one—at any rate to us. No reward was forthcoming; indeed, it would have been a somewhat nice question as to how to award it, F. being beforehand with them all, so the difficulty was got over by dropping the subject.

A government, though composed of never so soaring intellects, can as a body be very dense sometimes. A ludicrous instance occurred when F. was once directed to further the cultivation of nutmegs rather than of mace—mace being the mesh-like coating surrounding the nutmeg!

Two other distinguishing features of the locality were pineapples and monkeys, and these were not so unconnected with each other as might at first sight appear.

The wild pineapples were of a rough sort, though abundant; quantities of them were therefore transplanted to

the garden, and so treated—with elephant manure, among other things—as in two years' time quite to change their character. Such pineapples were never seen here before; finer there could not be. They attained the height of ten and eleven inches, and were proportionately large round, with the filmiest rind and a honey-like sweetness and aroma.

But for every one that we got for ourselves the monkeys got many, though they did not wait for any such details as ripening, wrenching the fruit off as soon as there was an inch or two of growth. At first we tried protecting with matting, but the monkeys saw the reason, and twisted all off together. Then we had a large wired enclosure made, and within it the pines came to exquisite fruition. We used to think we cemented a friendship or two by reason of those pines!

Guavas, *too*, were especially fine and abundant. It is impossible to describe a flavour accurately—no fruit is exactly like another—but in texture of peel and flesh a guava somewhat resembles a pear; it is rather rough in grain, too, like some pears are; the colour varies from pale or deep pink to yellow; the same tree will bear slightly different coloured fruit, the size of a lemon and oval in shape when of a good kind. In all directions round Manantavadi were numerous abandoned coffee estates, and in past times these had been planted up with good graft guava trees, which went on bearing, the fruit being free to all. In some places they had absolutely run wild, their quality scarcely deteriorating at all, and the ground would in season be strewn with the lovely fruit, on which animals feasted unheeded, for the people had tired of it. No one was enterprising enough to start a guava-jelly factory, or their fortunes would have been made. To me the fragrance of an English petunia blossom is exactly like that of a ripe guava; and I have heard others say the same.

Loquats were also common, now growing wild, though not originally so; flavoured like a plum, they are a most delightful fruit, small and golden-tinted.

Truly might it be said of parts of The Wynâd, 'Tickle the land with a hoe and it laughs with a harvest.' Among many easily raised fruits and vegetables the creeping or ground tomato was one of the best. It is a native, but, like most plants, it well repays cultivation; so a piece of our garden was devoted to this crop, which one special season promised to outdo itself.

No particular watch was ever kept; porcupines were the only likely thieves, and they were sure to help themselves by night—nor were they grudged a share; but when the tomatoes began to colour the quantity seemed to diminish all of a sudden. This was noticeable several mornings running, so as a hint to pilferers a trap was set, all blame being laid on the porcupines; indeed, nothing else was thought of, with their footprints distinctly visible in the weedless furrows. One night piercing yells were heard coming from the tomato patch. It was no porcupine at all, but a grey-haired old Kurumber, detained much against his will by the trap, which was clipped round his ankle. Nor was it the kind of night usually beloved of thieves, for the moon was high, lighting up everything clearly, and the man could be seen capering about even from the bungalow. He was released at once, and made to say how he got there, as we were struck by the curious absence of human foot-prints, except just where he had been stamping in his efforts to shake off the detaining trap, though there was a procession of the tiny marks we were accustomed to find. For answer the old rogue produced a porcupine's foot. We were beginning to understand, so as a penance he was bidden further to give us an exhibition of his mode of progress. Practice had made him perfect in it, for in spite of age he hopped along with agility, scratching over and obliterating every

sign of his own tracks and imprinting others in a manner to deceive anybody. It can be well understood that moonlight was essential for such manœuvres. A few Kurumbers who were wanted to give evidence in a thieving case had been brought to be safely housed in our compound pending the trial lest they should run away, and this old person was one of the 'credible witnesses.' As far, however, as he was concerned with our tomatoes F. let him go free, his bagful of spoils with him, just for his cleverness, and for exemplifying, as he had done to a nicety, the truth of a keen old proverb of his own land which says, 'There is shade under the lamp.'

The Kurumbers were in our estimation the best all-round men amongst the jungle tribes with which we had to do; they seemed to know what they were about more than most; some could even be relied on to speak the truth. Consequently, as we employed them whenever they were available, we came to understand them well. If a man were especially good at anything he was almost bound to be a Kurumber; on the same principle, from a certain thoroughness of character belonging to the tribe, if a Kurumber were a rogue he would be an extra smart one.

Among the little company of the Kurumber witnesses temporarily thrown on our hands one man was a blacksmith. These people are not indolent, so till their case should come on work was found for them in and about the Experimental Garden, and the blacksmith soon showed the quality of his muscle. What he lacked physically in other respects he made up by the strength of his arms, and it was a treat to see a native swing a hammer as he did. Wearing very little besides, he had round his waist a slender chain, not of links, but of fine wirework, as flexible as twine, and not much thicker; this I at first took to be of steel, but it was in reality of silver, tarnished to blackness with use, and was probably never taken off. This chain was

strung with any number of small implements, as well as grotesque charms, efficacious either in weaving spells round other people or averting theirs from the wearer. Besides these double-edged potencies, there was quite an Olympus of gods and goddesses—his 'little pieties,' to use a friend's expression. Some of them were of stone intricately carved, others only of burnt clay; some all head, and others all stomach; of the size only of a baby's finger, yet none so tiny but that it could be hideous to an unbiassed eye. Spurious ones of the kind can be bought anywhere for a few pice, demand regulating supply, but that these were out of reach I knew; nor was it well to talk of them in the hearing of the deities—that, too, I knew, having been warned against doing so. But the chain itself was not so fenced about. We asked the man how he came by it, because I said I should like to get one exactly the same. The quick smile beamed all over his face, and his eyes shone like agates, as he declared with pride that he could make one for the *Dursani* that very day. Had he not made his own? That he was not a mere blacksmith, but a silversmith as well. For a man to be both was a novel idea; the combination seemed incongruous; but the view taken here was that metals were akin: if you understood one, you understood all.

As my chain was to be a facsimile of his, the price could be ascertained then and there, and in a convincingly just fashion—simply its own weight in rupees *plus* the value of the working it, at so much to the rupee, according to a fixed scale. Thus two annas was the lowest rate; for that one could expect only the very plainest work of all, such as in bangles without heads or knobs; if with these and ornamented, then the price would be much higher; but one would always know exactly how much one would have to pay. The rate for this wirework chain was eight annas, so, as sixteen annas go to a rupee, the cost was soon arrived

at. I have forgotten what that was now, but it was very little. Where fraud can come in with such a system of valuation I don't know—in the quality of the silver perhaps ; but for that, again, there are tests.

These preliminaries settled, the man received the proper number of rupees, which he took to the local jeweller in the bazaar—that is, the native quarter in the town—not to buy silver wire, but to exchange the money for its weight in the wire—obviously simple, again. A peon was directed to go with him. I thought it seemed far from nice-minded for us to use such a point-blank precaution, making the poor fellow feel himself suspected, and I wished to have the order cancelled, but F. said that to do so would be to take half the man's pleasure away, for that his feelings ran more likely in quite another groove. Being given a peon for escort would go far towards publishing his errand, and so add lustre to his own name and that of his tribe generally. Not that he would be above making off with a handful of rupees at any other time—pluming himself, too, on contriving it.

The wire procured, and two rather massive silver hooks for the fastening, our blacksmith sat him down on the bungalow steps—this by our wish—and set to work. He began by choosing and unstringing one of the implements on his own chain. As regards shape, this might have been an ordinary and familiar crochet hook, but I never saw one so exquisitely delicate ; and it had need to be, for the wire was silken fine. With this his deft fingers formed a little circlet about half an inch in diameter, then he went on crocheting round and round till he had a stiff tube, about eight inches long, of the closest stitches imaginable. Next he fastened one of the hooks to the other end of the tube, and fixed the hook in a small vice borrowed from the bazaar jeweller, and began pulling steadily, slowly, and forcefully. It was wonderful to watch the tube as it gradually gave and

stretched till it was about three feet long, when the operator stopped his pulling to ask if this were long enough, because he could make it a more thread if desired. It suited me very well as it was, so there was nothing to do now but attach the second hook, and my chain was before my eyes, finished and without an inequality anywhere, so flawless was the wire and so evenly was it drawn.

That same system of payment by giving weight for weight obtains in other things besides ornaments. For example, the big copper cauldron used for boiling the *gram* for the horses and bullocks gets battered and worn in the course of service. One day a splendid new one appears, and you are only asked to pay the difference in the weight of the two according to the then market rate of copper per *seer*, which, like other market rates, varies. Thus you get 'new lamps for old' quite to your satisfaction, and, depend upon it, to that of the coppersmith also.

For cooking-utensils copper is now to a great extent superseded by enamel in European households in India, but there are generally to be found, and used in preference by the cook, some deep, handleless copper pans, which have to undergo a process of tin-lining every few weeks, or whenever the copper begins to show through again. The Tamil word for this re-lining is *kalai*-ing. The *kalai*-man knows that before he is paid his work will be put to the rag test; that is to say, he will have to rub round the insides of the pans with a bit of white rag, and if it becomes blackened it proves that his tin was half lead.

Wild mango trees flourished in The Wynâd—groves and avenues of them. We once took a journey in the blazing hot weather along a road near Minnengadi where the travelling was shady and delightful under their heavy foliage, a journey that could not have been attempted in the open—five miles of it, and every yard dim and cool. As to the mangoes, it was the season for them; they were dead ripe

and delicious. We picked them off the boughs as we rode slowly along. All were equally luscious, the size of small plums, and not more than a mouthful each, any of them. The animals—bullocks and horses—too were made happy, for we halted while they enjoyed a leisurely feast ; in fact, one and all enjoyed that day to the utmost. Moreover, not to miss such an opportunity, a great basketful was conveyed home, to be turned into a hot-weather drink on arrival.

Yet, though we made that journey many times, never again did we eat of the mangoes ; nor did we ever like to recall that one occasion !

Nothing further was done with the fruit that night, but the next morning the cook, looking rather queer, came and asked us to inspect it. He had begun crushing it to express the juice, but could not go on, for he found it was seething with grubs ! It was a horrifying revelation ; in our greediness we had swallowed the mangoes eagerly, without question, and almost without looking at them ; but now the bare recollection of that feast was revolting, and it has hardly yet lost the edge of its unpleasantness.

I suppose I should be guilty of omitting what is, or was, generally considered the most important feature of The Wynâd district were I not to make at least honourable mention of the gold found there.

It has been suggested that this region is the Ophir of the Bible, and gold undoubtedly exists in its river-beds and in the heart of its quartz hills. For ages past certain expert tribes —notably the Kurumbers—have gathered a living, albeit a meagre one, out of the river sand, which they wash exhaustively in wooden ' cradles ' shaped like English butchers' baskets, rinsing and swilling, and peering closely as less and less of the worthless sand remains. Hardly a cradleful but rewards them with its particles of red gold, which stay behind in the residue owing to its weight. Nevertheless, it

yields a scanty profit to the finders compared with the day-long labour involved in searching for it—so scanty, indeed, that Europeans concern themselves with the matter not at all, or perhaps I should say rather with those methods. One day, however, a worn-out coffee estate, planted up on a precipitous rocky hillside on account of the owner's lack of funds or judgment to buy a better site, and now, almost denuded of soil, yielding him but a bare bread-and-cheese subsistence, was found quite accidentally to be a veritable gold-mine. This occurred when blasting for the making of a new road was going on. That the estate was subsequently sold for a fabulous sum I know for a fact, and also that the discovery was only the first of a series. On the other hand, in many more instances than all these put together, flourishing estates were mined and under-mined, and the entire surface, if rocky, blasted and destroyed, only to reveal the thinnest vein of gold, and perhaps never another. Tons of quartz were crushed by means of expensive machinery, and but a few pennyweights of gold to show as the result. Thousands of pounds were spent in this way, and rich men brought to poverty.

I myself possess to this day the mining rights over a quite respectable area. It came about thus. Some ground was about to be cleared and opened up for cultivation. In the way were some rocks which had to be removed; therefore dynamite was brought for blasting them, and the Chinamen to do it. No men so handy or so daring for such a job; they seemed to delight in it for the sheer danger's sake, having to be forcibly prevented from lying down at the very end of the fuse!

I liked to watch what was being done, and after one explosion, on pulling up a tuft of grass from a cleft in the riven rock, I actually found two or three specks of gold adhering to the roots!

That was the beginning of it with us. The mining rights

over the land were acquired, not by my husband—he, as a Government servant, being prohibited from engaging in any commercial pursuits—but through others for me, and not by any means for a 'mere song.' The reef was called after me, and before long operations were in full swing. Machinery for crushing was procured; 'experts' voyaged from England to report on the percentage of gold; shafts were sunk, and gold was found; but for the pounds dropped into that ground not as many pence came out of it!

After a time the craze died out, but not till many had speculated with their all. Estates were re-opened, and by degrees The Wynâd again prospered under the slightly humdrum but pretty even sway of 'King Coffee.'

CHAPTER XV

The wet season in The Wynâd and Malabar—Land wind—Dinah—Pintu—Punch—Scenery of the west coast—Native houses—Government monopolies—Sardines—Pearl fisheries—Cliff bees—The apiary at Manantavadi—Silk-cotton—Varying climates of India.

On or about the 3rd of June was the time for the monsoon to break, sometimes heralded by a grand storm, at others beginning gently, with soft showers hardly to be recognised for the longingly expected rains; then for six months, though not always raining, it was so frightfully damp that one's piano (if one were lucky enough to have one), book-cases, wardrobes (always called *almirahs*), had to be fitted with tin pipes through them, with an outlet at the top, while at the lower end, on the ground, burnt small oil lamps never allowed to go out. In no other way could anything be saved at all.

Nearer the coast, and on sea-level, the fearful heat and damp of the rainy season tell on the health of Europeans in a far more trying way than would a dry, even if higher, temperature.

We were eight years on the coast; not right through, of course—no one could have weathered such an unbroken spell—but for most of the time. On first going there I was possessed of a quite respectable singing voice, after an amateur fashion, but in a short time it went, never to be recovered, so relaxing was the atmosphere. That it was not unusual for throat and chest to be so affected in that climate I learned from other instances.

Furniture had to be specially constructed to suit the climate, tables, couches, chairs, etc., being put together

with bamboo pegs instead of glue and nails ; the one would dissolve and the others rust. The carpenters and joiners in this part of India—at Palghat especially—are famous for their neat and beautiful work, and are in great request elsewhere. On the coast bamboo pegs are also used in lieu of nails in the making of small vessels and boats.

The rest of the year is as destructively dry. During the hot weather a land wind blows at fixed hours in the day ; an altogether detestable wind, to which all who can do so avoid exposing themselves. Book-covers and paper-knives may be seen to curl up if it play on them, and curl back again into place if turned round, apparently none the worse. The effect on animals is equally marked ; bullocks, horses, cows, etc., tethered to graze outside, if exposed to it are liable to get what is called ' a stroke of the land wind.' It completely and sometimes permanently paralyses the hind quarters or spine. The animals themselves have the sense to keep out of it, given the chance.

One of our dogs met with this crippling accident, never quite recovering, though she did not suffer beyond the liability to fall over if pushed in any way by the others. It taught her to keep near human beings who would help her up if she did so fall. Ever after her mishap this dog, Dinah, took her stand beside the dog-boy, for him to support her while she fed. This boy was a born trainer and lover of animals ; he had, of his own accord, instituted the habit of washing the faces of those dogs who liked to be in and out of the house ; they learned to come at his call to be made nice. His patience had no limits, and the endless tricks he taught his charges were only by means of repetition and rewards. He never left an ailing dog night or day—ate and slept with them if allowed to do so.

People who make friends of their animals in sickness and in health must most of them have spent nights in the stable ; my husband and I have done so many a time ; but that kind

of feeling towards animals is not to be bought, nor is it common with hired servants.

Pintu was a Eurasian, with the native predominating in him, and he preferred to live as one. *Kim*—that strange and beautiful book by Rudyard Kipling—was yet to come, but on reading it I knew that it was true to life, for our dog-boy Pintu might have stood for the original. He came without a 'written character,' and had never worked steadily before; had done odd jobs in a military cantonment at quite a distance from us, so how he existed on his weary tramp it was hard to say. With him was a 'pie'[1] dog—a very mongrel—of his own. He walked up to us, and without introducing himself further, said that he could not get enough to keep them both; that he had heard the *Doray* did not mind how many dogs he had; might this one of his have his food with ours if he worked about the place? The 'pie' was fairly flourishing, and stood looking at us and wagging his tail, as if pleading for both of them, but the boy looked as if he and hunger were not 'unacquaint.' Of course, the couple were installed, and Pintu's talents very soon came out. From the first every dog of ours adopted him, even some rather exclusive ones among them—his 'pie,' too, after a short probation. It was nothing short of magnetism that did it, for he had the same caressing hand with the horses, whom he made follow and whinny after him.

The *shikar* expeditions were somewhat of a trial to Pintu, as he never could bear any of his charges to be exposed to the risks involved, preferring to keep them all under his own eye, and even inventing ailments for them to that end; whereas the dogs themselves were never happier than when in the thick of it all. A year or two later, when Punch, a much-beloved member of the pack, was carried off by a panther almost under our very eyes—though no one actually

[1] 'Pie,' contraction of 'pariah,' *i.e.* homeless, ownerless.

saw it happen—Pintu's agony of grief made him quite ill. Lucky for him, the curses he invoked on his own head were unheard except by us. He also cursed every female ancestor of that panther's in several languages in a way that made F., who understood, almost laugh, though we were both nearer crying. Punch was a short-legged, stodgy dog, who never wanted to run off, and was as contented on the lead as free. The consequence was that he was very often allowed to walk amongst the rest loose. Neither did he lag behind. He was an all-round good little person, and as game as the best when wanted. For porcupines he had not his equal; many a time did he come backwards out of an 'earth' to have the quills pulled out of his body by the dozen, only to dart in again immediately—insensible to pain when there was any sport in the air. I have said that he never lagged behind, but he must have done so that once; for all anybody knew was that a choking cry was heard, then a rush through the jungle, Punch missing, and every other dog gone frantic. I shall never forget the misery of that search for him, only to pick up his broken collar, and find a few patches of yellow and black hair on the bushes—nothing more. It saddened the whole trip for us far more than his loss in some *shikar* tussle would have done, for that would only have been one of the chances of war.

From the day when Pintu, the poor vagrant boy, entered our service there was never again any need to wonder or worry as to whether the creatures on the premises were thirsty and unable to reach water, or whether their tethering ropes were twisted. He hovered everywhere, not in any spirit of spying on others and their duties, but from the sheer love in him for all living, speechless things.

We never met with that nature in any other Eurasian, or in any native. He was with us for years, seeing many generations of dogs, his own growing grey the while; leaving

us only on taking to himself a wife, and so being unable to follow our fortunes when we were transferred to another district. Sorry enough to bid Pintu 'good-bye,' we did not lose sight of him, but kept a guardian eye on him and his thereafter.

Most Europeans prefer having out-and-out natives to deal with rather than half-castes, who are generally Portuguese half-breeds. The women are sometimes very lovely after a mulatto fashion, and so fair that the dark blood is hardly discernible, though their children, again, might be almost like pure natives. With but few exceptions, they are Roman Catholics. They speak English in a way of their own (commonly called '*chee-chee*'), or French if they belong to any of the French settlements—Pondicherry, Chandernagore, etc.

Notwithstanding its bad reputation in parts for malarial fever, also for other complaints and discomforts of sorts peculiar to itself, people who know both coasts prefer living on the west. For one thing, it is so beautiful!—always green, the shore being fringed with cocoanut palms, some of them actually growing right out into the sea. Another point which contributes to the pleasing effect of the scenery is the terra-cotta colour of the people's dwellings. They are built of laterite, a rather soft and easily worked stone, which, being quarried in the country, is the building material almost universally used among the natives in this part of India. Most picturesque do these homes look, set in the green foliage of the gardens, every house having its own cultivated plot of plantain trees and palms. Conspicuous among the latter is the gigantic *talipot*,[1] not gigantic as to height—for the stem is very short and thick—but the tough, substantial leaves are so enormous that a few suffice for the thatching of a house of medium size. Narrow verandahs surround each house, and if the windows are barred it is

[1] Indian name for *Corypha umbraculifera*.

only for the safeguarding of property, the owners sleeping in the verandah.

A very curious and ingenious method of building, of which I saw several instances in progress, is sometimes employed by these people, instead of making bricks or availing themselves of the quarried laterite just mentioned. It consists in the use of a composition of earth, clay, and shell mixed with water and blood—to bind it; this is put into oblong wooden frames, two feet long and eight inches deep and wide, which when packed are wedged tight by means of iron clamps. After the mass has become firm the framework is removed from round it, and it is then dried in the sun. The houses constructed of these blocks are very quickly ready, and are quite durable. If the building be in a great hurry much larger frames are used; the important point is that the drying be thorough.

Salt is so generally considered harmful to vegetable life that when I mentioned the fact of cocoanut palms growing in the sea, I ought to have added that they are more luxuriant on coasts than elsewhere, sometimes attaining a height of eighty feet, and loving a sandy soil; indeed, to succeed at all, these palms must at the beginning be watered with brine, and that is a hard matter for inland people to compass. Some of the poorest depend entirely upon their cocoanut crop for a living, so it is more than a mere grievance that salt should be the strictly guarded Government monopoly that it is. The people are not even suffered to collect by evaporation the small quantity of sea-salt that would suffice for their personal needs and for the cultivation of their plot of ground—they must *buy* all they want! One would imagine that, however much salt were taken from the sea, plenty more would remain behind; but that is not the Government point of view, and the arm of its Salt Department has a very long reach and a powerful hold. It is no use at all for the people to assert what might be

regarded as their positive rights in the matter. However, if cases of salt-filching came under his notice, as would sometimes happen, living so constantly on the spot as he did, my husband was often blind to them.

There was the same rigour with regard to bamboos. A Government permit from the Forest Department was obligatory before a villager, one of those too poor to buy, could run up a hut for himself or repair his old one—burnt, perhaps, or blown down in a storm. He might possibly have to tramp many miles to obtain this permit, but if it were not forthcoming when he applied for his bamboos he would have his journey for naught; or if he dared to help himself secretly, some lynx-eyed observer was certain to pounce down upon him, and he would be fined—heavily enough, too, for one possessing so little. But as these permits were all in F.'s hands in his own district—nothing of forest produce being free—he took care to make them pretty comprehensive, in various ways seeing to it that the people did not suffer all they might have done from the tyranny of a horde of underlings levying tolls on their own account, thereby to eke out their salaries.

Commend me to a native for being hard on a native, and the lower class of Eurasian is as bad; it is from these that the petty officials of the Forest, Salt, Police, Survey, and other Departments are recruited. Very much, therefore, depends on the heads and their intimate knowledge of the people's customs and caste prejudices. They need be Argus-eyed, and *should* be devoid of fear and favouritism, but perhaps that is speaking too ideally. Happily, the highways of the sea and of the rivers are free; I never heard of tolls being levied there, whether on the people's fishing or their craft.

Unmanageably vast catches of sardines—the true, tiny sardines—are so common that they are laid upon the fields as manure. Highly odoriferous they are, too. The sardine

is equally plentiful on the east coast. At Pondicherry they are cured and dressed in ground-nut oil, than which none purer nor sweeter could be used; and this can be done cheaply enough to defy adulteration. These are for exportation to the mother country (France); and they are better appreciated there than they are in England, where people—the bulk of them—seem to like their sardines large, and preserved exclusively in Lucca or olive oil, so that they probably get very few genuine at all, their so-called 'sardines' more likely being sprats.

Of the constant but minor industries carried on all round the coasts, the pearl fisheries are worthy of mention. In our neighbourhood the native way of cleaning the pearls, after the shells had been opened by boiling, was curiously primitive but effective. The plan was to mix them with rice and grain, which was then thrown to the fowls—to *a* fowl rather, who picked up every pearl and seed without discriminating. In an hour or two's time the fowl was killed, and owing to the stomach's action the pearls would be found in it perfectly purified, white, and glistening. In some places on the east coast they open the shells by burning, thereby, to our thinking, quite destroying the beauty and colour of the pearls within. Only the very poor engage in this industry; for, though most laborious, it scarcely repays the toil expended on it, and ropes of the tiny seed pearls, with dozens of strands, are to be bought for a very small sum. The richer natives use them lavishly on their attire, having their sleeveless velvet coats, their slippers, and belts heavily embroidered with the pearls in masses, while their caps, constantly worn, may be adorned with the loveliest pearl tassels without attracting attention amongst their own countrymen.

The fisher-folk—*Catamarans* as they are called, after their boats, so named—of the Madras beach are said to belong to a very low order of humanity, but I must own I noticed

nothing special about them; to me they seemed much of a muchness with the rest of their class.

As I have already stated, everything in the way of forest produce was a Government monopoly. One item—a valuable one—was very hard to obtain, namely, rock-honey. Only one tribe in our district—the Jain Kurumbers—dared to adventure themselves on this quest. These men would climb anywhere, and would face the angry bees fearlessly, being inured to and immune from stings. Rock or cliff-bees are many times larger than ordinary ones, and are proportionately vicious when annoyed. One thing in particular they will not stand—the faintest suspicion of tobacco smoke. It is their usual habit to build in the clefts and crannies of almost inaccessible cliffs, where few can rob them. Sometimes, however, they choose lofty trees for their domicile. Once, when passing through the forest with his men, F., who was on in front, heard a buzzing overhead, and quickly turned back to warn them, but it was too late. Some one was smoking, and the bees had already perceived it; down they came in clouds, roused and enraged. The men might run, and some did, but they could not hope to outdistance the bees, who actually pursued them for fully five miles, tiring only a short distance from camp, where there would have been trouble among the bullocks and horses if they had come on. F. and some others of the party were heedless of bee-sting; though attacked, they felt no discomfort, and no signs of swelling followed; nothing was to be seen but a few red spots on his hands and whitish ones here and there on the dark skin of the natives. Of this select few not a man even hurried himself, whereas the others arrived in camp dropping from exhaustion. With but half a yard at most of covering about them, the poor creatures had been exposed from head to foot to the onslaught of the terrible bees; their bodies were swollen all over in the most distressing way, and their faces were so

disfigured as to look scarcely human. Indeed, into such eccentric shapes and to such size had the swelling brought them that it was only by dwelling on their sufferings that I could look at them gravely. One, whose gargoyle-like face was too much for my politeness, instead of seeming hurt and hiding away, smiled back at me so good-humouredly that I felt cut to the heart; but I made ample amends with a rupee and some tobacco, which he took, laughing crookedly, and saying that that had been the cause of their misfortune and was now their comfort! . Every man of them was given unstinted comfort of that sort, and we did all we could think of to alleviate their pain, which, however, had all passed off by morning, though some of the sufferers had looked ready to die at first.

Why some people are quite unaffected is a mystery. The bees alighted and seemed to use their stings just as viciously upon my husband and the men who were invulnerable like himself as they did upon the others; they merely removed them, and thought no more about it.

A flock of sheep in which we had a share of interest was once attacked by cliff-bees. They were 'club' sheep, maintained by the members and apportioned weekly, a notice being sent round and initials being set to whatever joint of the animal to be killed was desired by each, and selected strictly in turn. The herdsman fled, nor could he have bettered matters by stopping to be stung himself. At the moment the flock was crossing a *bund*.[1] Some of the sheep, trying to escape, took to the water; most of these were drowned, but a few afterwards revived. Not one of those stung recovered. We knew several instances of horses meeting their death in the same way, never a one being saved if attacked by these bees. They are not fond of great heat, and great cold kills them; but The Wynâd

[1] A sort of causeway through water, and built up of earth, either just wide enough to walk over dryshod, or for vehicles.

and similar districts, with a medium climate, are stocked with them—the wilder parts, that is, for they dislike disturbances, and seek for solitary and secret places in which to establish themselves. Nevertheless, the keen eyes and noses of their spoilers, the Jain Kurumbers, can ferret them out.

The honey of cliff-bees is rather strongly flavoured. I did not care to eat much of it myself, but it is in great request amongst the natives, who use large quantities of it for their sweetmeats; also in medicines, in which it is of great service, answering all the purposes of castor-oil and kindred wholesome nastinesses. However, native tastes differ from ours in many respects.

The honey when collected was brought to our house carried in great pots on men's heads, to be measured out and despatched by cart to its market, or sold locally by tender. To see the men come in at their usual half-run, half-walk; panting, heated, and dusty, with the viscid honey trickling down their shining faces and spare bodies from the overfilled pots—perhaps purposely so, to ensure refreshment—was not a pleasing spectacle. On arrival, down they squatted all in a row, relieved of their burdens, and free to set to work cleaning themselves. This they did much after the manner of flies, as any one who has watched the operations of a fly rescued out of a jam-pot would say, wiping off the honey with their fingers, and sucking away at them with evident enjoyment. Wash it off? No, indeed! That were a waste not to be thought of!

An apiary, as much as possible on English lines, was one of the things started by F. at Manantavadi, but the honey always tasted different from English honey, owing to the flowers the bees found being different from the home sorts. He was much more intimate with his bees than I could ever be, as he had nothing to fear from them. A highly comical set of trials were made among some would-be bee attendants

to ascertain who was, and who was not gifted with the like immunity. No hardship or cruelty was involved in these trials, as no one was obliged to enter the lists. The office was to be well paid, and the men were willing to have a try, the accidents that occurred before the final settlement being salved with a few annas.

F. had not always been immune himself. When he first took to meddling with bees he used to be badly stung, but bore it and persisted, so that in course of time his system became so used to the formic acid as to be unaffected by it. Some people never feel any effects at all, and in the end he got to be like them, lapse of years even making no difference. The same acid is present in ants.

Soon after the apiary was made a friend came to stay with us who took an intelligent interest in all we had to show, and who, though not long out from home, pleased us the more as a guest that she was not over-fussy about snakes, as most new-comers are apt to be, so she was invited to come down into the garden and have a look at the apiary, now in exhibition trim.

As we were walking thither she said to me that she wondered we 'wanted to keep things like that when there were so many wild ones'; besides, she thought it was 'rather cruel, if they could see and hear others round them free.' F. was ahead of us, and if he heard her remarks he took no notice. Presently we came to the enclosure, which was coarsely gravelled to discourage snakes from attempting to get at the honey, thus scaring the bees, and incidentally getting infinite damage themselves from their stings. Here stood in orderly row five or six hives, their doorways dark with bees, and the air thick with the numbers that circled all around—we two keeping out of range, and F. acting as showman inside the enclosure. Looking at them straight in front of her, 'I don't see any,' said our friend; and upon my husband's asking her what she had expected to see,

'Apes,' was the reply, and the expression of his face told me that he knew it!

If the bringing in of wild honey was somewhat unpleasant to watch, other items of forest work were prettier, notably the collecting of silk-cotton, as it is called, a silky substance attached to the seeds of the *Bombax indica*, a magnificent forest tree, soft-wooded, with glossy green leaves and blossoms of pale primrose. Lovely stuff it is, like floss silk itself. I have cushions now filled with my own gathering. This cotton is in exhaustless demand, and is therefore one of the most valuable products of the low-country forests, where at the proper season the ground is covered with the bursting seed-pods, scattering their snow in all directions.

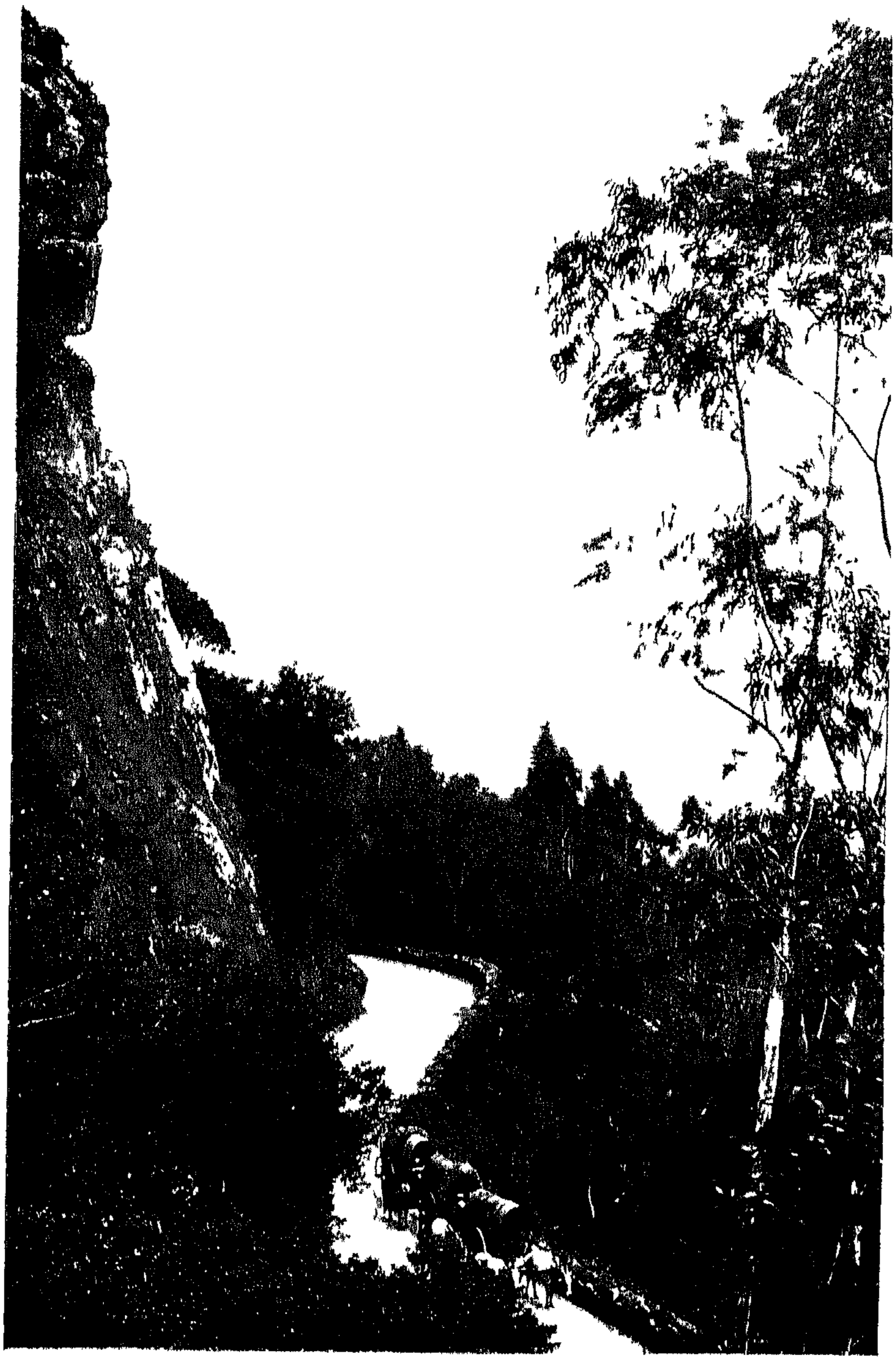
The native method of teasing the cotton out after husking is simple enough, and thoroughly effectual. It is bundled loosely into closely-woven wicker baskets the shape of a hen-coop, and some five or six feet across. At the top is a small aperture just large enough to work a stick about when inserted. The stick, which has two cross-bits at the lower end, is twirled rapidly between the hands so that the movement sends the cotton flying, loosening every curl—the cotton is very short—while none can escape. For mattresses to be taken to pieces and their stuffing fluffed out in this way and made up again occasionally is quite a usual practice—where mattresses are used at all, that is; for in some places a very fine description of grass mat laid upon the wire spring, a thick rug being thrown over the latter, was the most comfortable, because the coolest, bed of any. Pillow-cases of grass matting were very delightful too; I will not call them luxuries, for they were a necessity if any sleep was to be obtained. They afforded a sense of refreshment even in the most exhausting weather, when a wet bath-towel had to be pinned to the already low-hanging punkah to wave within a few inches of one's face; but the towel did not keep damp very long. Of course, there is

always a garden one could sleep in, but I preferred the house-top, as out of the way of snakes and the troops of noisy jackals which were quite likely to race past one's bed; not that they would interfere with one in any way, only they were disturbing. On the roof one could slumber in peace, but a thick blanket to catch the heavy night dews had to be laid on the mosquito-net frame overhead. The blanket would be wringing wet by morning. (As I write this I am thinking specially of nights in the Deccan, and also in Coimbatore.)

An India of oppressive heat is the only one that people who know nothing about it picture to themselves. My own experience of that kind of India, where one could scarcely breathe with a roof over one's head at night, was slight, extending only over a few years; while I can certainly say that I have known breathless, sultry August nights in our temperate climate of England which were quite as trying. For in India, though the temperature is higher, everything that makes for coolness is studied, no end of appliances to minimise discomfort being within the reach of those with very moderate means.

Off and on, I stayed a good deal where eleven or twelve degrees of frost, and even more, were common; where linen and prints were only for the hot weather; serges and furs being needed for the cold; where fireplaces were the rule in every room, and the supply of peat and logs—coal we had not—important items in household bills; and where the life is in many respects very English as to climate and clothing and occupations. This was in the Nilgiri Hills of Southern India, at an elevation of some seven thousand feet; and Northern India has her Himalayas, the region of eternal snows—called the Snowy Range.

The truth is, India is so vast. She has many widely diverse climates, in far-reaching tracts, where neither palm trees, nor sand, nor elephants are to be seen—the typical features in imaginary pictures.



A. I. H. Tour Photo

ROAD TO THE NILGIRI HILLS

IMPERIAL
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CHAPTER XVI

The first coming of 'The Lady'—Captain H. and his pet aversion—His conversion by Tim—Fright with a snake—Grass fires—Caterpillars and fishing-lines—Silk moths—Trials of silk-culture—And success.

Not one of our tours but was marked by its own special incidents, pleasurable or the reverse, sometimes even momentous, as when dog Punch, who left home so gaily, never returned. Another and happier one, bringing gain instead of loss, was when we brought back a still craven-looking pariah dog who turned out to be worth almost any other two of ours put together, for the true sporting instinct that was found in her, only needing to be called out. She displayed an obedience, too, not to be surpassed that followed speedily on finding her unowned, homeless self provided with both home and master; and a certain directness of demeanour soon took the place of the cringing, deprecating air, as though apologising for her existence, which had been her nearest approach to friendship at the beginning of our acquaintance. A very poor thing indeed she was when first espied creeping about on the fringe of our camp, just within sight and sniff of the dogs' fragrant supper, not expecting to be given any of that, however, and on the watch to dodge any missile that might be hurled at her, that being about all she was used to receive unsought, by the look of her cavernous ribs. A meaty bone first inspired a touch of courage, and day by day she approached nearer, till a civilised tinful could be placed for her acceptance. That was how 'The Lady,' as she came to be called from her gentleness, entered our family; a gentleness quite apart from the craven bearing of fear—the more craven

the more spiteful, mostly—born of ill-usage. Some of these pariah dogs, running wild everywhere, are of the finest natures and finest tempers possible, though how they come by them is a wonder, for they are usually 'against every man' as 'every man's hand is' as surely 'against them.' Several of our best-prized dogs had been strays.

A man we knew, an Englishman too, had a very un-English aversion to dogs. He said they always growled at him; nor was he ashamed to own it, like most people would be, as arguing something amiss in themselves. Having lived through a good half of his life in this frame of mind, one fine day he with crowds of others was watching a polo match. How it came on to the ground nobody knew, but a very ragged, mangy specimen of a 'pie' dog did creep up—led by who can say what instinct?—to that man of all others, and put its muzzle into the hand hanging at his side as though it were that of a friend. Instead of starting away with uplifted cane, Captain H., as he told us and others afterwards, felt a sensation of pleasure hitherto unknown spring to life in his mind at the confidence placed in him. For the first time in his life he was sought and trusted by a dog; no other had ever done that. He and his aversion were widely known, and those who watched the scene found it even more interesting than polo. *This* dog did not flinch at the expression in his eyes, usually cold, if not angry, when looking at anything in dog shāpe; it did not growl nor show its teeth, only stood its ground, and was patted by the unaccustomed hand till its tail wagged again! That dog *would* not know it was unwelcome, nor was it. When the match was over it followed Captain H., who whistled to it like any other man to any other dog, and many eyes watched the incongruous pair, for the man was one of the best groomed to be seen anywhere, and the dog one of the most unkempt!

Even in things pathetic the comic touch comes in. An

ordinary leather collar was not good enough for this dog, and a pure silver one was made for it, with the adopted master's name and regiment engraved thereon. In the chill of early morning, when taking exercise with his horses, it wore a coat of dark blue and white like theirs, with the letters 'H. H.' embroidered in one corner; and the coat wrapped a sleek body now, not to be known for the same. From the first 'Tim,' as he was named, took up his sleeping quarters at Captain H.'s feet, whence he could never be dislodged, and he was as his shadow by day. When a year's furlough became due the pair of them went home; there was never any idea of aught else. The best of it all was that a complete and mutual change of front was thus brought about between the dogs and Captain H., for they ceased to growl at him now that what had repelled them in him was gone. As for him, he became a thorough-going dog-lover—all Tim's doing; nor could he now understand his former attitude towards dogs, the only explanation of the change being that Tim was the only dog who had ever unmistakably seemed to want his friendship. Truly, Tim stood for more than a mere dog: he was an era in a man's soul.

Of another tour one thing only stands out in clear relief before my memory's eye—my first, but not last, fright with a snake.

Having travelled all night we had settled ourselves to rest during the heat of the day under a great shady clump of bamboos, with rugs and pillows spread about on the lovely green grass beneath. Such tempting retreats are apt to be snaky, and we ought to have hesitated. F. was tying flies, an art in which he was an adept, and I was lying back on my pillows reading, when the one under my head moved, as if pressed down without any movement on my part. Moreover, an earthy odour was noticeable, and I had heard what that odour generally betokened—a snake. Straining my eyes sideways and upwards, there, sure enough,

I saw one on the pillow behind my head, and now gliding past it. It was a large one, too—so much I could make out—and my blood ran cold, but I managed to whisper, 'Snake on pillow.'

'Rubbish,' was the feeling reply; but the next minute, very quietly, as was F.'s wont in a crisis, came, 'Rat-snake; keep still.' To do that is the hardest thing of all at times; however, to know that it was only a rat-snake was everything, and I could breathe freely. With a length of his rod F. directed the creature's course upwards into the clump, and it went swiftly enough, inoffensively drawing its six or seven feet of length after it. But such interruptions never upset one for very long, so after a look round we soon settled down again on the same spot, there being nothing against it when the unwelcome intruder was gone.

One form of excitement which I did not enjoy was a grass-fire blowing might and main our way. This happened accidentally sometimes, for when the grass and scrub were very parched they were apt to catch alight in a storm. At other times danger arose from the wind veering unexpectedly, when the fire had been kindled on purpose. It was usual just before the rains to burn the old dry grass that the new blades might spring up more quickly, so affording fresh pasturage for the flocks of goats that had to be taken miles in the hot weather in search of something to keep life in them.

The way to fight an approaching fire was to meet it with its own weapon, by starting another at a safe distance from camp, and sometimes almost girdling it, according to the wind. A sufficiently broad belt was thus made, on reaching which there was nothing left for the original fire to feed on, so it died out of necessity. But it was fierce work. One day, when happily there was very little wind, we discovered that a fire—how caused no one knew—was licking its way very slowly, but much too surely, towards the camp. We

knew that only a few of the servants were about there; neither could they see the fire on account of an intervening hillock. There was no time to be lost, so we raced thither and set to work. Every one knew exactly what to do, and all worked as one man, with one definite object—to defeat the enemy. Fine sweeps they looked when all was done, F. being as black as the rest. A little feast had been well earned by the men, and they got it—extra dried fish and tobacco and grog.

On one such occasion there was some added merriment in jeering at the cook for his share in the work. He had so lost his head as to pick up a flaming bunch of grass and throw it upon the thatch of the hut I was standing in, watching the scene. He was advised to get away and hide, but he pulled himself together and did yeoman's service afterwards. Beyond the hole burnt in the thatch no damage was done anywhere; nor did we ever suffer serious loss from this cause at any time, so smartly and judiciously were things managed.

That tours should be undertaken for special purposes was natural and a matter of course, *shikar* being merely incidental. The object was generally to start some new project or produce, or to gather in some established one, of which, as usual, Government held the monopoly. One tour, however, was made for the express and only purpose—we being on leave, and spending it on our favourite Brahmagiris—of collecting what even Government did not claim, nor, as far as I know, any one ever want up to then, namely, caterpillars, F. having discovered a particularly large hairy sort, the intestines of which were especially adapted for the making of fishing-lines. Collected they were by basketfuls, and several men's loads (of about fifty pounds weight each) were brought in and killed instantaneously by being dropped into boiling vinegar. This was the process: when cold the bodies were cut open and the intestinal canal—a mere thread—removed, washed, and afterwards stretched and

dried. Dyed they were, too, for use in waters of varying colour, the lengths being most neatly joined.

That much I was told, but it never occurred to me to inquire where or in what vessels the boiling was done. I did not want to see it, the thought of it was horrid enough, but it so happened one day that I did see accidentally, and, O horror! on several fires in the kitchen were as many saucepans and pots all a-simmer with caterpillars stewing in vinegar—the saucepans and pots used for cooking our food in! I said at once that I never could or should have them used for food again, and then learned that this was not the first time it had been done; therefore I had already eaten several dinners cooked in the pots after the caterpillars. I was told, moreover, that I had been none the worse for it; the saucepans, being of tin-lined copper or iron, all could be easily scoured out. In fact, there was nothing that any one need mind about it; the vinegar not being allowed to stand in the pots and pans, they took no harm. That that was a very material point, I knew. As to my objection to the use they had been put to, F. thought it was only fussy. Fortunately it chanced that we were expecting people to stay with us who were more likely to side with me than with him, so a fresh set was procured.

Altogether, I thought dead caterpillars were trouble enough, but a time was at hand when living ones were to become the one engrossing subject, filling up every moment of my days, and also almost literally filling every crevice and chink in the house; invading my very clothes even if they were left to hang for two days together uninspected.

Inventors are generally dreadful trials to their families, and so sometimes are naturalists—as such. F.'s idea was to naturalise, or acclimatise, valuable silk-moths in The Wynâd, so establishing a new industry, and eventually a source of revenue. Cocoons of the *Eria* moth from Assam, the silk from which is of rare strength and beauty; the

tussore-silk moth, or *Atlas*, and others, were imported carefully; and trestle tables were provided all round the verandah for the accommodation of trays for the future progeny, so many at last being needed that narrow alleys between them was all the space that could be spared for the attendants, who had to move sideways. The new bungalow for the Forest Officer was built by then, and we were occupying it, or this experiment could not have been carried out, the old ramshackle, rat-snaky building before mentioned having been condemned on F.'s representing that it was only fit for the creatures it harboured. He had been allowed to send in his own plans, so the result was a very commodious bungalow (to our idea), with a garden adjoining. This was on the top of the hill. Below was the Experimental Garden already described.

The new building contained four large rooms opening into each other, passages being rightly regarded as waste of space. There were dressing and bathrooms attached, and very wide verandahs all round the four sides, glazed in with a double-sliding arrangement, as affording better protection against, as well as offering less resistance to, the force of the monsoon.

Nothing more beautiful can be imagined than those moths when they emerged from their chrysalis tombs and unfolded their crumpled and still damp wings. One, the *Atlas* moth, measured twelve inches across from tip to tip; some specimens of this sort even more. They were of a soft fawn colour, and covered with down so long that it was almost feathery. In the four wings were what resembled little windows of a talc-like substance—as large as a threepenny bit in the larger wings—and so transparent that one could see clearly through them! The hinder wings were extended into long delicate stems, something after the fashion of a peacock's tail plumage, ending in a claret-coloured 'eye.' Another moth had a snow-white body, thickly feathered,

and as big as one's forefinger; its wings were of the palest apple-green, also inset with the talc-like windows, and finished off with the stems like peacocks' feathers—they all had those. All were of enormous span, but the *Atlas* the greatest.

The moths were all very well; nobody minded them; but there were too many—so our friends said. Their cocoons had filled several foot-square biscuit tins when packed; then when they began to multiply, and the eggs hatched out into minute, wriggling life, the numbers were not to be guessed at except by those who have tried breeding them. Newspaper trays, made by pinning up the corners to a height of some three inches, lined the tables; no tray might stand upon another, obstructing air and light from the occupants. No; fresh space must be found for them, whoever was squeezed out.

As to their food, the wild mulberry flourished abundantly all over the district—a fact ascertained before this enterprise was set on foot; and other plants and leaves were equally relished, especially the castor-oil; so we could rest assured that their sustenance would never run short, and could be varied. The collecting of it was a business, however. Mere men were unequal to the task, so two carts and two pairs of bullocks were bought; none too many either, for they had to go miles, as tree after tree, plant after plant was denuded. The villagers reaped a good harvest by selling us their castor-oil leaves, as every one grows these plants for the oil, which they use in lamps, also for feeding their babies and older children; for feeding, not doctoring, the native bread and biscuit being dipped in the crude oil and given to them to suck. They thrive on it, too! I remember that the first time I saw a baby being thus fed, the mother softening the bread in a little clay lamp saucer, wherein floated the wick, it shocked me so much that I told her to come up to the bungalow for proper baby food. She

was the wife of one of our *syces*, so it surprised me that she had not done so before, being apparently too poor to feed her child properly. She came, and was given condensed milk and baby biscuits, protesting the while that her way was the right one; nevertheless, I insisted. As ill-luck would have it, the baby died, and its mother said openly that 'the *Dursani's* bad food had poisoned it.' I have no doubt she honestly thought so, arguing, perhaps, from the fact that her other children, all brought up on a castor-oil-and-bread diet, were thriving. What could be said in the face of that?

Being wanted, therefore, by the people for a double purpose, it was not likely that the supply of leaves from these plants would give out, as they needed only the seeds.

It may sound imaginative, but nevertheless it is a literal fact that the caterpillars were in such myriads, and so voracious, that they could be heard feeding. There was a constant rustling, apart from that of the leaves—the ceaseless action of tiny jaws working day and night. Busily, faithfully, the little creatures were doing their part, preparing for the impending change, when nothing would remain but to wrap themselves, each in its silken shroud, to await the new birth. Could it be that they were aware of their approaching transformation? Yet how could they know?

In other ways besides tending and keeping them within the bounds of their respective trays—no light undertaking—our enormous families needed care. They had to be kept moist and fresh by being constantly sprinkled with the fine rose of a watering-pot. This had to be done gently but thoroughly, or, artificially circumstanced as they were, none would have lived through the critical time in their existence, namely, that of the sloughing and renewing of the outer skin. They would have been unable to rid themselves of the old skin before it shrivelled and cracked and dried hard upon their tender bodies, which must be kept

supple. As it was, if some, being under the others, were missed out in the general sprinkling and were in danger of death by strangulation, human help came to their rescue, such being invariably hunted up. With finely-pointed scissors, and the gentlest touch possible, the dry, papery cuticle was snipped away, and the beautiful little bodies released. For this native fingers were especially adapted; our people thus freed hundreds, never bruising any.

At first I could not endure to touch the crawling creatures with my bare hand—their proximity even was unpleasant to me—but soon every bit of that repulsion vanished, and I felt only admiration for their beauty, and for their intelligence, plainly shown by the way they turned towards those who fed them in unmistakable expectation. They knew also what to refuse and what to accept of the leaves given them.

A curious fact in connection with caterpillars is their—I believe universal—power of assimilating the colours of whatever kind of vegetation they may be feeding upon. Ours were sometimes given variegated caladium leaves, which are so beautifully marbled with crimson, pink, and white, and even with black veinings occasionally. The effect on them of these leaves was especially marked. Caladiums were not wild plants in The Wynâd; they were cultivated for their foliage in great variety, so they could not be every-day food.

The casualties in our trays were very few; certainly not one was caused by neglect—from inadvertence, perhaps; but I can truly say on behalf of everybody concerned that not an egg was crushed nor a singly squirming mite lost knowingly, so loyally did each of us do our part in furthering the great experiment.

There were caterpillars everywhere, and all a-crawl, till it made one's eyes ache. Small, their numbers were bewildering, but as they reached maturity, and a length of

fully three inches each, they were overwhelming; no trays could hold them; ready to spin, they roamed everywhere in search of a retreat, wishing to choose for themselves, and showing resentment at interference by delay in spinning.

Of course, a proper building ought to have been arranged for them, but, with no one's leave to ask but our own, we had thought the run of the house would do. Although we knew, theoretically, that if it had been a mile square it would not have been too large for creatures with their wandering propensities (and powers of locomotion to match), we did not realise it till faced by armies of facts. I am, however, only telling the story of how things were done, not of how they ought to have been done.

Naturally the larvæ were not all at the same stage of their development at one and the same time. So when the greater number of them had completed their round of destiny, and the cocoons were collected, silk-weavers were brought from their own homes to finish the work. First they laid the cocoons in warm water to loosen their tenacious gumminess, and then detached the silk. When we saw the glistening threads being wound off by their expert, satin-smooth fingers, we felt indeed repaid for all our trouble.

If we had thought there were too many caterpillars, not so when it came to cocoons, for needs must a vast number go to the weaving of even quite a small piece of silk.

A native artist of Trichinopoly was sent for to make water-colour drawings of the moths and larvæ in every stage. His work was exquisite in its fidelity to detail, and was used in the illustration of a booklet F. wrote when the experiment had justified itself, and a piece of beautiful pure silk fabric was presented to the Madras Government, under which he served.

Shortly after my husband's headquarters were transferred; and that was the end of silk-culture in The Wynâd,

his successor preferring to keep in old, easy-running grooves. A Government commission, or salary, does not imbue a man with a taste for things involving personal exertion and expense; he has to find himself in that part of his equipment, or go without.

CHAPTER XVII

Slaves in India—Native methods of hunting—Music and dancing—The musical scale—Native music at Hyderabad and Madras—The Todas—Their hospitality—Buffalo cream—Marriage system—Sacrificial festival.

SLAVERY, abolished in some countries, is not so in India; there it is common enough; moreover, what we saw of it seemed unobjectionable. The system may give rise to abuses (in the native states, for instance), but I only speak to what I knew of it in The Wynâd, where it flourishes, and has always existed.

Certainly, judging by all we witnessed ourselves and learned by questioning the slaves, they could easily have been worse off; and that was also their own mind about it, as we knew, for we saw them at work and at play. They called it play being loaned to us as beaters in a shooting expedition, when we hired them from their owners, who were *ryots*.[1] Doubtless there are bad owners, as there are bad masters; judged as a system, however, this one seemed to answer very well; for there is slavery and slavery. These slaves were paid for their labour, not in money, for which they would have no use, but in kind—so many measures of grain and other food stuffs; so many cloths; and a blanket every year. They were provided, too, with huts, or the material to build them. Though themselves slaves, as were their forefathers, yet they lived in a land where slavery was not the rule; every one was free but they—nominally, that is, perhaps no more free in reality—and they knew quite enough about the conditions of those

[1] *i.e.* farmers, or cultivators of their own land.

other lives to be able to compare them with their own; yet we never heard one of them complain or express a desire for freedom. Here, too, the slaves do not change hands; they are not bought and sold in open market. The buying and selling were done centuries back over the persons of their ancestors. It has been mentioned earlier that a certain tribe showed African descent; it is this to which the slaves belong. Intermarrying now only amongst themselves, their type of face is distinctly negroid, though blurred by the lapse of time and as the result of cross-breeding in past days when first brought to India as merchandise by Arab traders.

As to their hair, it is crisp and woolly to a man—a perfect bush. I have seen many of them with it standing out one foot all round their heads, and very quaint they look, the old ones especially—little shrivelled black men and women with haloes of white hair!

They were hugely delighted when ordered out to accompany us, for they knew they were going to have a good time, and meat galore; while to us they were particularly useful, being non-caste folk, and consequently could be employed in many ways where caste would have interfered inconveniently—annoyingly, even, had we not been used to it. This happened in the case of one set of people, mere coolies—load-bearers—who, while not looking so very different, and wearing, if possible, even less clothing, nevertheless held their heads mighty high, as being caste. They could not be asked to carry anything of leather, not a post-bag, or even a load with a strap attached! They could choose their own masters, too, as against the poor slaves (who did not pity themselves, however), who always understood that when the Government, represented by their *Doray*, wanted them, they must be ready. We used to think that same caste was the hardest master of all; for there were many things those coolies and others would gladly have joined in

but for that ; eating this and that food, and so on, for they are childishly greedy. Some of them would not eat anything that had ever had life—animal life—though they would have liked to do so. Others might eat a killed animal, but not a dead one ; that is to say, if it had died after being shot they might not eat it, but if its throat were cut before death occurred, then they might ; and we were not likely to oblige them in this detail, even had it been possible. That was the state of things with some Mussulman peons we had, who often looked longingly enough at the rest feasting, but with these latter it was more a question of religion than caste. One cannot but admire and respect their constancy, for nothing tempts them to break through their principles, however hair-splitting some of their prejudices appear to us.

Beaters, I must explain, are men whose part in a *shikar* expedition is to make as much noise as they can by shouting, clapping hands, thumping tom-toms, blowing horns, etc., as a preliminary to the sport proper, the object being to surprise and disturb any possible game, and so drive it out in any given direction.

Though the slaves were as good as any at this, they were less practised at manœuvring and circling the coverts, not having such unlimited leisure at their disposal as others of the country, and the hill-men, who organise beats on their own account. The methods of these last are cruel to a degree, giving the hunted no chance at all, let alone ruining the country for decent sport. They sally forth by dozens, and with their clamour soon drive a marked animal into a small covert ; a doe or fawn, no matter, it is all one to them, they being agile enough to accomplish their object even with a tiger or a panther. They then surround the place with enormously high nets, without a rent or a weak bit anywhere, catching them on to the trees firmly ; for there must be no breaking through—trust these hunters for seeing to that ! Then when the quarry has been driven, dazed

and terrorised, into a given corner, it is met with a flight of arrows. Once enmeshed, the strongest are helpless; the creature's struggles bring the net down round it, when it is at the villainous mercy of its captors. The sort of things those men find pleasure in are not to be written.

However, they could not allow themselves such treats very often, for it was difficult to keep the secret, and if the *Doray* came to hear of it, they knew he had ways of making them feel his displeasure very uncomfortably. No force of example would ever avail here, only the fear of being found out, and he worked upon that. The whole of the guilty tribe would find itself excluded from his next expedition, and could be left alone to punish those who had taken part in the stolen one. Not all the men being able to leave their villages at the same time, some were bound to be innocent.

Negroes are known to be almost invariably musical, and the African blood in the slave-folk told in the same way. A melancholy strain ran through all their melodies; they were mostly tuneful enough, but some were nothing more than a weird sort of wail. In this their songs belied their natures, for they were a very merry set. As for their dances, I delighted in watching them; the wildest, most fantastic ever seen, but with step and time harmoniously true. For some one to tap softly, with measured beat, on a little gourd tom-tom was quite enough to start the whole crew of them lying about round the camp log, and in an instant every muscle in every man's body was alive. As happy, and, as far as we were concerned, as harmless as kittens, though looking like nothing else but demons—their faces alternately reddened in the glow of the fire and black again in the shadow—they whirled round and round, waxing more and more beside themselves every minute, till one after another fell down from sheer exhaustion, and the rest danced on and over them as long as they could keep it up.

The musical instruments which these people always

brought with them, uncouth as they might look, hid wonderful harmonies of chords and of flute-like notes for those who could invoke them. They were self-taught; but to hear a trained band of native musicians playing their own music is a treat not to be forgotten—it is hauntingly beautiful. Try as one may, it is impossible to reproduce anything in the least approaching to the gradations in their scale either on the piano or with the voice. I was told by a skilled flute-player, who was acquainted with Western music, that the formation of the throat is different in us, so that we cannot graduate the scale as they do, and that their instruments follow suit. He made his meaning quite clear to me when he said that while our music has tones and semitones, theirs has tones in between these, and he drew a line upon a piece of paper to represent the Hindu scale—continuous, without any break at all; a thing impossible to our voices, but he sang it himself in one continuous thread or line of sound—I can describe it no plainer. Our scale he drew as a series of dots, and as he sang it, it sounded disjointed and broken, just as it looked on paper as compared with his line. He also said that they had to acquire our scale by long practice; their own came natural to them.

In Hyderabad and in Madras and elsewhere I have heard wonderful music. On one occasion especially the musicians were all seated in a circle on the ground to begin with; for their mode of playing obliges many changes of posture—they even lie down to it sometimes. Some had reed flutes, some ivory; others violas and guitar-like instruments; innumerable cymbals, too—tiny silver ones giving out a chiming sound, as well as huge brazen things deafening to be near; while some, and those the greater number, had earthen water-pots by way of drums, a few of which were but six inches in diameter, others being eighteen inches or more. The pots were round, with a small opening only large enough for the performer to put his hand in to hold it by.

By closing the mouth of his singular instrument with his own, and breathing into it, or by laying his cheek flat against it, leaving a partial opening, or none, the volume of sound was regulated at the musician's will. By drumming on the sides, inside and out, with finger-tips, knuckles, and elbow, the most wonderful variations were introduced on these magic pots, big and little, *ad libitum*, as it seemed; for there was no written score, such as we require, spoiling half the effect. It was a perfect feast of harmony; softly, exquisitely, throbbing and swelling on and on, till it reached a climax of barbaric clash and clang like nothing I ever heard before, nor ever could again, except in the land where such inspirations are born.

We heard a burst of very different kind of music on the occasion of a visit paid to the Todas, an aboriginal hill-tribe of the Nilgiri Hills, of whom only a few hundred remain. It was played on horns, whence issued the wildest and, to our ears, most discordant sounds, yet with something in them that was not all discord. Knowing what it portended, namely, a sacrificial ceremony, we left directly it began.

The Todas are a grand-looking race of men and women, but I should think there could not be a dirtier nor a more 'stand-offish' one, for they hold no 'truck' whatsoever with their neighbours. Possessed of vast herds of buffaloes, grazing at will over the sparse upland pastures, they will neither give nor sell any of the produce derived from them; not a drop of milk nor a leaf-ful of butter; the reason being that Toda buffaloes are sacred. However, it ill befits me to speak thus, for we were treated with hospitality both spontaneous and unstinted.

Few Europeans care to visit a Toda-*mund* or village in the intimate way we did; nor should we have been allowed to enter it but for a word or two spoken in our host's language—that 'Open Sesame' to all hearts the world over. They brought us plantains, wild peaches, bread, and a



TODA MUND—WOMAN'S SALUTATION

woodon bucket of cream. Such cream! a perfect blanket of it, solid and quite delicious. The buffaloes being fed on cotton-seed, their milk and the cream is white, not creamy, in colour. We mightily enjoyed our feast, dipping the little flat, round cakes of bread into the cream (and wishing we might take away such another bucketful with us), a crowd of our hosts and hostesses staring hard at us the while. Our feelings on nearing the bottom of the bucket can be more easily imagined than described, for there a horrifying sight was disclosed to us. In as thick a layer as the much-relished cream itself we now came upon the submerged bodies of beetles, flies, spiders, bees, cockroaches, and what not. These, too, had all found the cream much to their taste, fell in, and were left there—for us to find! F. felt rather ill; I got over the shock better; and, to our credit be it said, we both behaved so well under the ordeal that no one else noticed our disgust.

Accustomed as we were to the slight frames of the usual run of natives, it was a pleasure to contemplate such a different order of beings as the Todas. Every man we saw was big and broad-shouldered. The features of these people are straight and heavily moulded, the complexion olive, though no darker than that of many a weather-beaten Englishman, and every head shaggy with a perfect thatch of coarse hair. The women are not tall, but they, too, are upright in their carriage. They wear their blue-black hair parted exactly even, and hanging down upon their cheeks in quite lovely curls, in many cases reaching to their waists. This gives them a Victorian-era air oddly out of place as surmounting their figures; the curls, too, are produced in the ordinary way used in our nurseries, being done up in rags overnight. Considering that these women know nothing of us and our customs that small fact struck me as rather remarkable, for I ha
other natives. Some of them st

possibly not having expected us. Living in a cold climate as they do, every one is enveloped from head to foot in very heavy linen stuff, woven by themselves of flax fibre, and bordered quite handsomely in blue and red designs. When the members of the tribe are grown up enough to require clothing they are given a cloth; this suffices for them till they marry, when a new one will be provided, and that will be made to last them their lives; a third is given for their burial, which seems inconsistently lavish. This rumoured extreme economy of theirs in dress—not as to inches, but in regard to the time they will continue to wear the same identical cloth—we had heard of, and we thought we could smell it to be true. Disregarding the condition of these garments, it was the way they wrap themselves in them that made us think of togas and ancient Romans when looking at the classic-featured wearers.

It had needed some interest for us to get the privilege of *entrée* to their *mund*; it was also necessary to crawl, almost on our chests, to get into their huts, the doors being only some eighteen inches square. Once inside, we were conscious of nothing but a wish to be out again, such was the atmosphere of thick, pungent, malodorous smoke. Very little could be discerned by our unaccustomed eyes except the mud divans all round the walls; there was no furniture whatever, straw and skins serving for beds. Windows there were none, only a hole in the top of the bee-hive-shaped hut. We had been warned of what we might expect if we carried curiosity so far; but the chance was a rare one, not granted to everybody, and we risked it, though it was a week before we felt really clean again.

These people are polyandrists, only in the sense, however, of a woman being the wife of several brothers. Her children belong to the family generally, and the eldest brother is head of the house. If a man have no brother, then his wife has but one husband.

In other respects besides their distinguished appearance the Todas differ from their neighbours. Far from demanding pice (money) at the mere sight of Europeans, they would have been mortally offended at any immediate payment for their hospitality to us. Our making them some return later was more courtesy, and as such accepted.

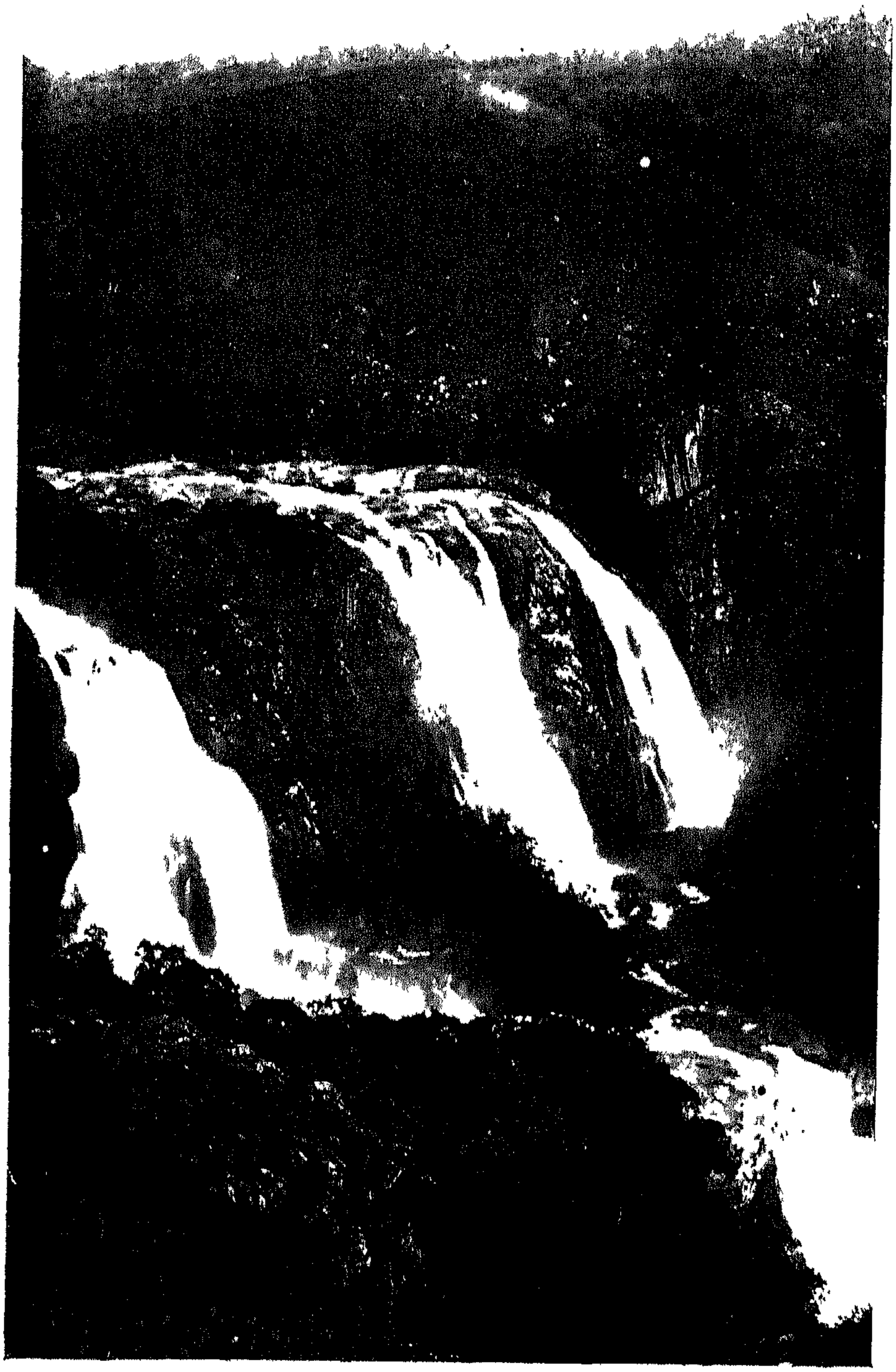
When we were taking leave they told us that their great annual festival was about to begin, and that no strangers might be present; but I imagine that none who knew anything about it would wish to be, at any rate at near quarters. Just then the first screeching notes of that discordant music reached our ears, setting our teeth on edge, and we were only in haste to be gone far enough out of eye and earshot, wishing we had chosen any day but this for our visit. We knew only too well the sort of thing it would be towards nightfall: men and women working themselves up to a pitch of madness by their frenzied dancing to wild music, and buffaloes by dozens being driven into the circle to be slaughtered—not speedily and done with, but with long-protracted agonies—while the songs and chantings, dances and orgies constituting the sacrificial rites dragged on into the dawn. If ever then it would be an unusually short affair; three days of it was more likely.

Neither do they spare their own bodies and blood; it is the priests of Baal over again, or rather such rites have always been: 'For they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.' The 'manner' of the Todas is precisely the same to-day. In spite of their lofty air and high-mindedness they are true savages after all.

It is said that the wild human cries and the lowing of the miserable buffaloes can be heard for miles. The sound of them carries far, echo answering echo across the valleys and along the hilltops. And for all their jealousy of observation they cannot prevent the eyes of strangers being on

them, for their doings have been watched from some coign of vantage, and made very clear by the help of field-glasses. We were told by eye-witnesses who had so watched them that by the look of the people it is only a wonder that they stop at the sacrifice of buffaloes—when they do stop—except that their numbers are so fast decreasing.

However, the nerve that could look on at that sort of thing in cold blood was not ours; neither did we desire it; so having unintentionally come so near, our only wish was to leave it all behind as quickly as possible. We made the best of our way home, but we could not forget that those terrible scenes were being enacted within a ten-mile ride of Ootacamund, the Simla of the Madras Presidency!



PYKARA FALLS, NEAR OOTACAMUND.

Weeks & Lum, Photo.

CHAPTER XVIII

Return to Manantavadi—Butterflies—A man-eater and his prey—Story of the tragedy—Mysterious disappearance of an Englishman—Drastic native punishments—Fakirs—Suttee—The Car of Juggernaut—The martyr of Benares.

THE faculty for being surprised, unlike other faculties, sharpening by use, is apt to become dulled, or at any rate difficult to arouse, when surprises become the rule instead of the exception; when it is the unexpected only that is expected, as in our jungle life—the tame one of civilisation had, in our estimation, no such quality of freshness to show. Those who have only experienced the latter might doubt the charm of our existence in the wilds as being altogether too 'nervy'; we knew both, and were in no doubt at all as to which we preferred.

Our month's leave in bracing Ooty [1] being up, we started on the homeward ride to our headquarters at Manantavadi and the Experimental Garden with its thousand and one interests, but we went through an adventure or two before reaching it. That our ride was a memorable one will be readily understood when I mention that part of it was made, all unawares, in the neighbourhood of a man-eater that was coming up on his own dread business as we were going down.

The main Ghat road—the Pykara Ghat, as it was called, starting from a place of that name—being tediously winding and dusty, we left the baggage-carts to crawl round by it at their own pace, while we, with the *syces* leading the horses, took the usual and generally much-frequented foot-

[1] Ootacamund (commonly called Ooty).

path which led to the low country, in pleasant leafy shade all the way. The men had food with them, and the horses carried their own provender slung over the saddles, while for us there was a tiffin basket crammed full of provisions. It was a leisurely day-long picnic all through; we met no one, nor anything of special note, and sorry we were to leave the dim green dells for the unwelcome blinding glare without; yet that, too, had its compensation in the flocks of wondrous butterflies, flitting, poising, hovering by hundreds everywhere in the sunshine—their very life. Living gems they were of amethyst and emerald, nothing less, looking well-nigh transparent some of them from the talc-like spots in their wings (like those of the silk-moths); and these were fringed at the edge, by way of an added touch of fantastic beauty. It was always the same in this neighbourhood, but I never beheld so many together anywhere else, nor of such rainbow hues.

Not being far from the Travellers' Bungalow we decided to push on to it after an hour's halt, and were just setting out to finish up a pleasant but uneventful day when a number of villagers came running up to us, calling out in evident distress, some bitterly weeping, and their faces blanched with horror. One of their people had that very day been carried off by a tiger; such was the story they had to tell. Four men had started up the Ghat at daybreak, taking the same path—there being but the one—that we had followed in the opposite direction; three only had returned, all idea of pursuing their journey or its business knocked out of their heads by the horrifying catastrophe. F. had a talk with these three, who told him exactly what had happened, as far as they could speak coherently, half-dead and dazed with fright as they were, and no wonder! They could only say that one of them, the last man in the line of four climbing the path, had been seized and dragged away into the depths of the forest, a thick and impenetrable jungle, where none

of them durst follow, knowing rescue to be impossible, even had it been their own father. He had not cried out, they said, and must have been struck down from behind, and instantly borne off. They heard the sudden rush back through the bushes, and knew which side of the path it was, but as to the direction taken there was not the quiver of a leaf to tell, so close was the cover and so quickly was it done. Just for one instant they heard the sound a tiger makes with his prey in his jaws—a growling and snarling—and then dead silence. A cat that has caught a mouse behaves in exactly the same way, making an angry, threatening sound, harmless enough to human beings in her, but terrifying in the tiger, though of the self-same character. From this sound they knew it was a tiger, recognising the growling over possession; for they had heard it before when some animal from their flocks had been seized—that had been bad enough. But now they saw nothing; only knew that their companion was hideously gone, had fallen a prey to the prowling enemy; that it might have been any one of them—might yet be, for aught they knew!

One hears occasionally of people being carried off by man-eating tigers, but never of any escaping if once attacked; at least I never did, and there must be many more who meet death in this awful form, simply not being heard of again. But neither does such a tiger himself escape for very long; his life is a marked one, for he leaves a trail of blood wherever he passes. To-day this tiger had killed his last man.

The scene of the sickening tragedy was unusually high up the Ghat side for a tiger to ascend; they prefer warmer latitudes—that is to say, low-country tigers do; for there are plenty in cold latitudes also, each keeping to their own habitat. The spot must have been at an elevation of quite three thousand five hundred feet, where it would be comparatively cold. How far his quest led him on we could

judge pretty accurately; for the men told us they were wearing their blankets, having tied them over their heads with a string round the neck, hood-like, which would account for the man's cries, if he uttered any, being much muffled. They had been followed, that little company of four, by the hungry tiger, unsuspected, stealthily watching for his chance, and then taking it with unerring judgment.

As we also had set out at daybreak, travelling towards that party, and consequently towards the tiger that was stalking them, it seemed to me that we must have been running the same risk as they all day. But F. thought not; for the man-eater, having marked down his man, would not have let himself be distracted, nor would he seek other prey for some days till he became hungry again. In an ordinary way we should have met the four villagers; as it was, the three fled back horror-stricken.

A letter meant to reach F. before we left Ooty to stop us from starting had been delayed on the way by the illness of the bearer. It was from a brother sportsman, giving *khubber* (news of game) from a private and reliable source of the more than suspected presence of a man-eater somewhere on that Ghat, and proposing that an expedition to bag him be arranged *ek dum* (immediately), so as to secure the prize for themselves before he should have, perchance, advertised himself to all the native *shikaris* by carrying off some poor wight—which, alas! was just what he did do.

Khubber of this sort travels far and wide, if sent by word of mouth, so for that very reason the message was under seal; but we wished the news had filtered down sooner to this village, and perhaps hindered these four from setting forth upon their journey. As it was, the writer of the belated letter was with us before it eventually came into our hands. He heard we had started, knew our destination, and was there almost as soon as we, having come by the long

road, which for him, riding at breakneck speed, was really the shorter way, being all downhill.

The villagers, terrorised by a calamity hitherto unknown amongst them, implored the *Dorays* to kill the beast before he should have carried off any of their children or old folk, let alone more strong young men such as his one victim, as yet, had been. The *Dorays* needed no urging; but a guide to the spot was advisable, for there was nothing on the path to mark it when we passed along—a guide only so far as to show where the man had been seized. The rest—the ascertaining of whither he had been taken—would be done by F. and the other sportsman, one after his own heart, and as cool as a cucumber. The three who had lost their companion had now partly recovered themselves, and were keen to help all they could in avenging him. All volunteered to act as guides, but it was thought that the smaller the party the better. Also, whoever went must remain; no going back; for there must be no needless tramping about. Therefore the unmarried one was chosen.

It was already two o'clock, there was not much time, and all to do by four or so, when the tiger, after having gorged himself and then slept it off, would be stirring again; but now, they could feel sure, he was still sleeping heavily, and in no condition to notice what might be going on under his nose. They all thought it unlikely that he had carried his prey very far, nothing being there to dispute it with him, and the cover dense all around; though, like a common cat, a tiger must always steal away to devour his 'kill' in solitude. They expected to come upon indications enough of his whereabouts if he were anywhere near, while, of course, it was quite on the cards that he might be miles away.

To make a long story short, the party of five set out—the two shots, their guide, and a couple of peons with spare rifles—and indications were found in the shreds of cotton

cloth and brown blanket caught here and there on the thorns; in the blood-besprinkled leaves and grass, where a way had been forced through, and the boughs and bushes wrenched aside by that tremendous passage; and in the sickly odour, by which they knew they had found the remains of the victim.

Though the tiger would not be alongside he would not be very far off; for the habits of wild animals do not vary, though their hours may, according to whether they have a full stomach or an empty one; if the latter, then they must keep on the prowl till their larder be replenished, giving themselves but little sleep except during the sultry noontide.

That this tiger was now sleeping in some dim, cavernous retreat could be counted on as a certainty for just so long, and no longer, unless, indeed, he had so over-eaten himself as not to waken for another twenty-four hours; that was quite possible, but they had to be ready for him in any case. Two out of the five men were past masters of every move in the game on hand; the other three knew that, and followed their direction unquestioning.

A hastily-constructed *machan* was fixed up at the proper height on a suitable tree, with closely-set boughs, to which it could be securely lashed. Upon this F. and his friend settled themselves to sit up over the 'kill' for as short or as long a wait as might be necessary, the spare rifles beside them, and a provision of flasks and biscuits. The peons with the villager were perched up above, they, too, having food and water. The chief trial in long vigils of the kind is cramp, for all must be still as statues; a movement might be fatal to success; therefore F., as every sportsman would be, was very careful in choosing his rifle-bearers. These two men could and would endure as long as their master—more was not asked of them. The villager seemed made of the same metal, for the peons told me afterwards

that, though an untried man, they had no fear of him, judging him by the look in his eyes and the set of his jaw.

It so happened that the tiger was to time ; he appeared suddenly, his noiseless footfalls giving not the least hint of his approach till there he stood, nearly full face, looking leisurely about him, never once casting his eyes aloft to where other pairs of unwinking eyes were hidden in the foliage watching him. Lots had been drawn for the first shot, and the lot had fallen to the other sportsman ; but the truth was that the way that tiger spread himself alongside the 'kill,' in no hurry to begin, and absolutely unsuspicious of any danger lying in wait for him, deprived the thing of all idea of sport : it had lost zest for them both. F. told me afterwards that had it not been a case of a man-eating monster, and therefore a clear duty to put a stop to his career, they would have let him off. To draw a bead behind the ear as the tiger lay and pull trigger seemed almost dishonourable, even in his case ; and it was thus they felt about it in other similar cases. With so close a shot there was not the faintest chance of missing ; of course, if it had missed things would have taken a different turn ; but no—alive one moment, stone dead the next.

As usual with man-eaters, the fur was patchy and harsh, entirely lacking that satiny gloss which is the glory of the coat belonging to a decently living animal. Those that take to the vice do so mostly in old age, when wind and limbs fail them, and when they must go hungry many a time because unable to run down a fleet stag or tackle a bison. They begin to look out for something easier to capture ; perhaps on some (for them) lucky day they come across an old crone hobbling her painful way along, and try their chance, to find no prey so easily come by. Ever afterwards they seek the same, waxing bolder, too, with practice, and discovering that even a man, unarmed, can be taken, let alone women and children ; thus sometimes a village has

boon decimated. Famine years are responsible for turning many ordinary and hardly feared tigers into man-eaters. Of this we had proof enough, it being only what might be expected at such times; for then many chances offer themselves in the weaklings crawling about, or even lying half-dead on the roads by dozens.

It is said that feeding on human flesh produces scurvy; that such has been seen amongst famine-maddened, shipwrecked people reduced to that last resource. It would seem to have something of the same effect on animals; at any rate, man-eating tigers are invariably found to be diseased and mangy.

The tiger episode ended, and the village tranquillised, knowing it could now sleep in peace (every man, woman, and child in it our bounden slaves), we left, to continue our journey homewards, another couple of days' journey through the prettiest bamboo-country imaginable; while our friend returned to Ooty with his seedy-looking but most glorious trophy, showing as it did of what manner of monster the world was rid.

It was hot travelling, so we rested in the shade by day; but though our route was a pleasant and picturesque one, it took us through a neighbourhood with uncomfortable and creepy associations before reaching our destination. This was the scene of a mysterious affair that had never been cleared up, though many theories were started, and an exhaustive search made at the time it occurred, and for long afterwards. It seems that a young Englishman of the Survey Department, but recently joined, had ridden down from Ooty by this very Ghat, and along the same road as that on which we were now travelling; he was walking, his horse being led by the *syce* following closely. He was an enthusiastic botanist, and on reaching a certain point he bade the man stay where he was, saying that he himself was going to hunt about for specimens near by, and strolled

off, the two hailing each other every now and then, in case Mr. T. should go astray. After two or three such calls had been unanswered the *syce* became uneasy, and while keeping an eye on his horse, moved round, shouting loudly; but never a sound came back. He waited, and as people passed up and down the path he got them to help in the search, which they did willingly, till crowds of them gathered, one running as a messenger to the nearest village to give the alarm. The place echoed and re-echoed with the hue and cry, but all in vain. Nothing more was ever heard or seen of the young man, except that his watch and chain were picked up quite close to the spot where he had left the *syce*. Not a shred of clothing or a trace of blood was found, nor any marks as of crushed grass made by a forced passage through the scrub; moreover, it was very open just where master and man parted company. No suspicion of foul play ever attached to the *syce*, who was devoted to his master; and the tiger theory was the only one to fall back upon, though there was no talk at the time, either before or after Mr. T.'s vanishing, of a man-eater being about. No other, however, would account for the total disappearance of the body. If it was a man-eater, then, after dealing that one numbing blow from behind—as with the villager in the case related above, who was never heard to cry out—he must have caught up his insensible victim, and raced off with him, getting plenty of start while the *syce* was calling and wondering at the silence.

Riding through the same place it was impossible not to recall the mystery—uncomfortable, too, as unexplained happenings always are—and it was a relief to get into the open country; for, despite the shady avenues of over-arching bamboos and the general pleasantness of the forest, the air seemed as though heavy with tragedy. The ground we rode over was spiky with young bamboos springing up everywhere; so numerous were they that we could not

avoid trampling on them, thereby destroying many a possible lordly clump. Looking at these green spikes we were reminded of two widely different uses to which they are put at that early stage of their growth. One is the preserving them in syrup, when they are not easily recognisable for bamboo, in 'Chow-Chow,' that delicious compound of all sorts of things cut up small, or very young, such as gherkins, tiny green oranges, limes, etc. The other, a horrifying one, in which the rapid growth of these shoots is utilised in one of the cruel and ingenious methods of torture too common in the East, I will not describe. In all these tortures, called punishments, natives are as resourceful as in other directions; the nearest thing will serve their turn. What can be nearer than a bamboo shoot? For they grow nearly everywhere by the million, at the astonishing rate of several inches in a single night, too. Not that these practices are openly carried on—in British India at least. Some Europeans may never have heard of them, though living among the people who invent and apply them. It is said that criminals have been condemned, not to death directly, but to some fell disease, a thousandfold worse, even to ravaging leprosy itself! As to the truth of this I cannot speak. The simplicity of their ideas it is that strikes one; no complicated machinery of pulleys, cords, or blades, only Nature herself put to the business—just starting her. Cruelty begets cruelty, here as elsewhere. A man who had been subjected to the bamboo torture, and survived it, told F. that all he lived for afterwards was the chance of doing as he had been done by. We never heard if he got the chance; but his will was good. One would think that crimes meriting such cruel penalties must needs be terrible; not so, necessarily. A few annas' worth of stuff stolen, or a scrap of leather, or some such trifle is quite enough to get the thieving hand crushed with a mallet, or imprisoned in green hide, or——. But there is no end to the choice of tortures; they are read

of commonly in the newspapers, and every one is familiar with them by hearsay. And yet, considering what these people will voluntarily undergo, one wonders if there be any limit to their powers of endurance. Neither wild beasts nor human tormentors could be more cruel to them than they are to themselves in their strivings towards a future life and salvation, not in expiation of their own sins alone, but in truly altruistic efforts for their fellows. Instances of these martyrdoms for an ideal may often be seen in a village street, where some emaciated creature is walking or limping along, or rolling over and over on the ground. He may have vowed himself to that, never to stand upright again. Round about him the hard-headed, money-grabbing, probably knavish, populace watch his progress reveringly ; and, thoroughly believing in their share in the benefits that ensue, drop their pice ungrudgingly into his begging bowl—a cheap salvation to them, bought with the other's blood and suffering. One such poor creature we saw at Manantavadi. He was just passing through, on a three hundred mile pilgrimage (whither I have now forgotten), and, in accordance with his vow, every yard of it was to be covered in the painful way I have mentioned, namely, by rolling over and over and over along the road, if there were any. When he should come to an obstacle, such as a river, which by no amount of will power could be thus traversed, he would have to be ferried, or he might ford it, but he would be sure to choose the route that would give him most trouble. He was a shocking spectacle, hardly human, and now in years ; his long rope-like hair tied in bunches, and full of ashes, which he rubbed in as if road refuse and litter were not enough, was fastened round his waist ; blood, never wiped off, was on his face and body, cut and lacerated as they were by every flint or sharp thing that lay in his path ; of his garments hardly a whole inch was to be seen, and the poor exposed frame was startlingly emaciated. But the eyes of

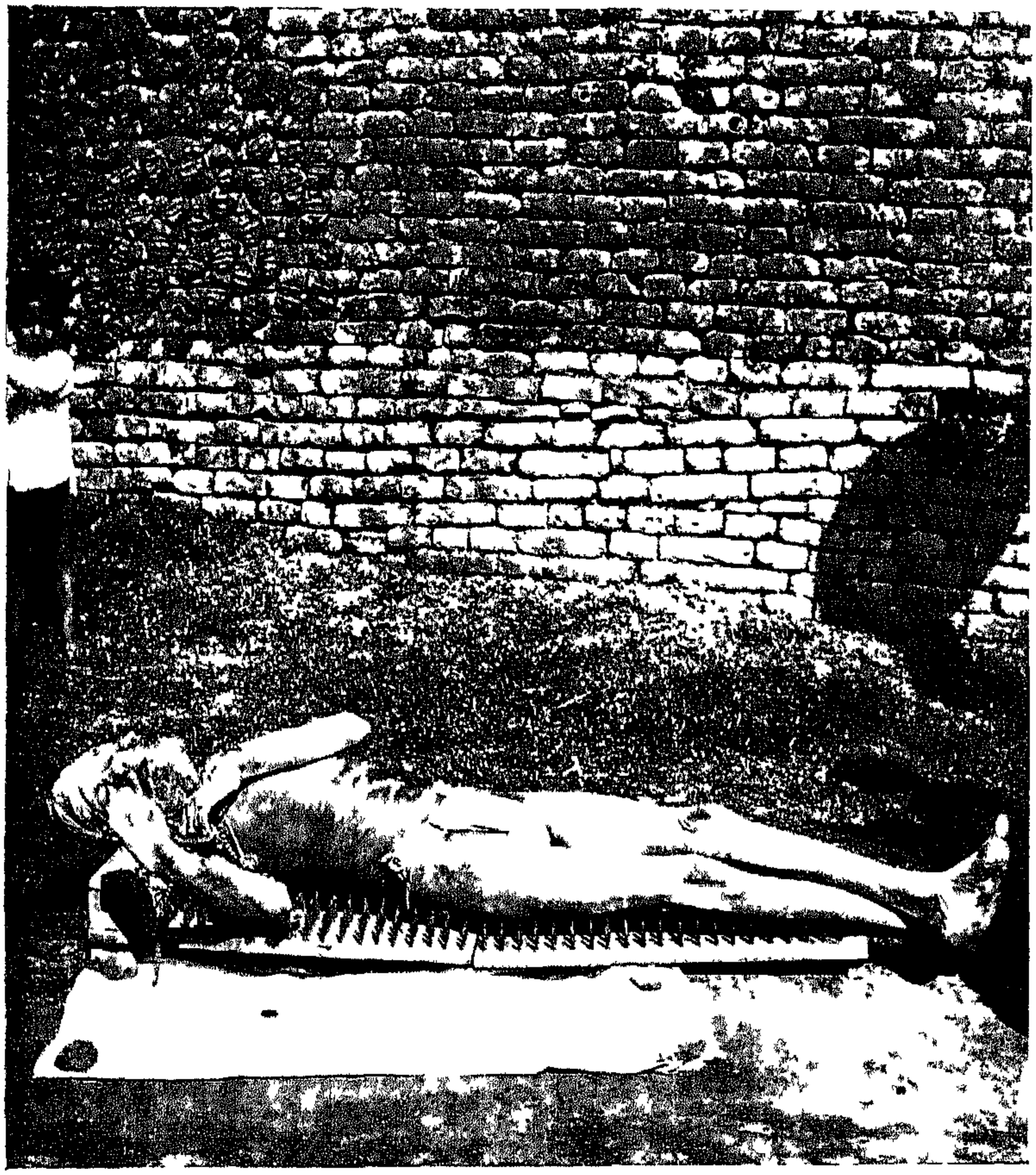
him! bloodshot and nigh mad, not with lunacy, but with devotion and ecstasy. No transient impulse of a revivalist convert; as long as life should last one idea would dominate that man, 'counting not the cost,' feeling neither heat nor cold, hunger nor thirst, only one thought in the poor blind heroic soul—to keep his vow, to reach the goal. Salvation to be bought with his agony and endurance for the sins of others. Nothing lower than that magnificence of aim was his ideal. It makes one think.

Sometimes one will take a vow in early manhood that he will clench a fist, never to loosen it; till it comes to pass in age that the nails have grown through the palm, and that suffering is long past. That is no rare sight. Or a vow that he will stand on a pillar with one arm extended, being supported in the strain till the arm have learnt to obey, and does not drop; then at last comes relief in that it cannot do so.

Those three poor creatures—I have seen many more than three fakirs, as they are called—were old then, and must long have passed to their reward. Accounted saints on earth, I dare believe that they are saints now, in very truth, for surely everything lies in the motive.

In 1829 Lord Bentinck took measures to put down the ancient Hindu custom of suttee—the self-immolation of widows—but cases are still heard of, ay, and sometimes not heard of, when the widows claim a voice in the matter; for they it is who insist on mounting the funeral pyre, as their mothers did before them.

The great Car of Juggernaut still exists, and is used on occasion of the annual festival in honour of Vishnu—the second god in the Hindu Triad—and claims a yearly tribute of devotees, who lay themselves in the way of its progress that they may be crushed beneath the wheels. Many an isolated place has its Car, and no dearth of willing victims. They do not want to be prevented, and where we have no



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HINDU DEVOTEE OF KALI

jurisdiction this and other unspeakable rites prevail, and will continue to do so, because the spirit of the thing is immortal. Though they are not done so openly as they used to be, they are still done. People will torture themselves in public in the most ghastly ways, and never a groan. It has been suggested that some narcotic is taken to deaden sensibility, but I do not believe it; to do so would be to give the lie to the men who undergo these things, and to whom it is no matter of merely showing off for the sake of applause. Besides, the pain is what they offer in the voluntary act, as acceptable to their conception of the Deity; a conception in this respect shared by other creeds and not peculiar to the so-called benighted faiths of the East. Exaltation of mind and rapt ecstasy suffice to support them under the torture as long as it lasts.

At Benares, the Sacred City on the Ganges, the chief seat of Hinduism, and one of the most ancient cities in the world, there was up to some few years ago a man who had had himself laid upon a bed of iron spikes, the spikes being about two inches high, square-sided, and closely set. On that he lived for thirty-five years, but before he died he had long ceased to suffer. The wounds were healed, he rested on the wooden couch, for the spikes had embedded themselves in his flesh, and could do no more. He had become almost flat in his emaciation. A thatched shelter had been put over him as a protection from sun and dews, and he was fed with just so much as would keep a pulse in him. Coercion there was none; that death in life he endured believing himself to be a redeemer of his race; it was for the sins of a world that he lay there. He was not the first of his kind; he will not be the last.

The martyrdoms of Christianity itself pale before such as these in that these are voluntary. The whole span of life from early manhood is renounced, the joy of living dropped, and the endurance of unremitted torment taken up instead;

and not for fear of worse befalling—of hell-fires in lieu of earthly burnings—neither are they done for self at all. What matter whether in the name of Brahma, or of the Buddha, or of the Christ? The spirit of renunciation is the same in all, and as such is accepted. Let us be sure of that.

CHAPTER XIX

Changes in India—Government servants and gifts—The Zenanas—Slave-girls—Visit to a Zenana at Hydorabad—Fidelity of servants—Entertainments—The Nizam's palace—Native banquets—Sir Salar Jung—Tombs of Golconda—Old priest in the mosque—Human monstrosities—'God's animals.'

MANY changes have come about of late years in India, and if that have been said before, and is now repeated, it is because the fact strikes one so often in regard to her varied aspects. Not as to her creeds and religious practices—there are no changes there, nor probably ever will be, speaking of India as a whole—but in manifold other ways things are different. Fortunes are not made by magic, as in 'John Company's' days; 'shaking the pagoda tree,' as it was called, does not now bring down a shower of gold mohurs. Native princes have in times past made many a doctor wealthy in gratitude for some lucky cure, but they do so no longer, because the doctors may not take more than their dues. Government servants get their salaries, which are not to be supplemented by back-door ways. I am not saying that they were so formerly, only that they cannot be now. So rigid and distinct are the rules that if the word 'perishable' can be applied to a proffered gift that gift may be accepted, but not otherwise. Fresh fruit, for instance, or sweetmeats, may be so described, but not tinned fruit; that is not perishable in the sense intended. We had such gifts offered us—a dozen large tins of preserved peaches—once, and ornamental boxes of ivory or sandal-wood, which, not being perishable, had to be refused. Neither would there be any offence taken, for the giver

equally understood the Government definition, and in fact rendered himself liable to suspicion of bribery by his offer. I do not say that there is absolutely no exchange of gifts, only that it is disallowed in the official service. All that is certainly a change for the better, that the balance may be held even. Other things are not so easy to adjust or abolish by rule, as the examples given in the last chapter testify.

Nevertheless, though progress is very slow in the East, even there a new life is pulsating. The newly acquired taste for travel has given rise to fresh sets of ideas in many minds, but the pleasures of travel are not to be indulged in without incurring a vast deal of trouble on the return. Endless caste ceremonies for purification are quite indispensable if the traveller wishes to be received back into his family after being contaminated by mixing with low-caste and casteless persons.

Perhaps the Zenana mind is the most inaccessible of any to new ideas—no thought of travel there—yet even there ideas have penetrated. Those who in their ignorance have said that there was no mind to reach spoke with little knowledge. Indeed, there are minds, and of the subtlest, in the Zenanas; plots are hatched there to be carried out elsewhere, and never any connection to be traced. Women govern India. I have heard that said by educated Hindus, and others who knew intimately more countries and more races than their own. The strictness of *purdah* (screen or curtain) makes no difference; the ladies, the wives and favourites, from the seclusion behind the *purdah*—which they never leave, and where no male eye rests upon them except that of their own lord and master—pull the strings of governments and of dynasties.

Not so long ago slavery—sometimes of a kind nowhere surpassed in horror—existed in the Zenanas, though, happily, owing to persistent personal effort, the face of things

has changed in recent years. A friend of mind, well known throughout the Presidency for her work in the Zenanas, told me that she had seen a slave-woman hanging near the bottom of a deep well, the water—in which water-snakes were swimming—reaching to her knees. She was unable to escape from the snakes by raising her cramped limbs out of the icy, underground water, or—a poor alternative—end her sufferings by drowning herself. When she had hung there long enough they would haul her up, in what condition I cannot imagine, not having seen her; but in this special instance, at the visitor's request, the woman was brought to the surface sooner. She was crying feebly, but made no complaint.

Knowing the ways of natives in general, if not the usages of Zenanas, pretty well by then, it was foolish of me to ask why the whole place where such things were done was not routed out. Could not Mrs. F., with her intimacy in these Zenanas, effect what no one else could? The answer she gave me was so obviously true that I might have guessed it beforehand. No, and for that very reason. Were she to publish abroad the wrongs she witnessed, and which it was her lifework to strive to remedy, there would be an end for ever of that work from the *inside*, where no authority could reach. Moral influence was all she could even try to use; for it would take more than the ill-treatment or murder of a slave-girl to rouse their lord against his favourites. She would be much more likely to get herself shut out if she attempted it, and then good-bye to any future hopes of improvement as far as she herself was concerned in them. From the *outside* nothing whatever could be done. That also is India.

Mrs. F. told me that a very hard part of her work lay in controlling herself when an eye-witness of indignities unspeakable—of outrages inflicted on womanhood by women, of hopeless slavery; in trying to appear as though she did

not care so very much, when she was nearly maddened, the blood surging in her head with the sight of things going on before her eyes, which she was impotent to prevent or alter immediately. Hands would be clasped round her feet pleading for her intercession with a mistress whom no tears could touch; that was the hardest of all. The little she could effect would be choked back by the custom of centuries, and by treachery always present; for she knew she was walking on egg shells all the while herself, her own life at the mercy of the merciless.

It was a reigning favourite who had had her slave suspended in the well; but the tables are turned sometimes, and an ex-favourite finds herself done by as she would have done—has done—in times past.

Though I heard many a tale of cold-blooded crimes I heard, too, of patient sweetness and of good rendered for evil by slave-girls, even by one whose face and shoulders were not yet healed where her mistress had pinched tiny bits out of her flesh with an instrument; a 'heathen' girl, too. But I think of her as a St. Elizabeth; for when that mistress came to be stricken down by some loathsome disease, and had become dreadful to all, she alone would go near her to minister to her needs.

In sickness the lot of these women was very hopeless before lady doctors, who are now welcomed, were admitted to the Zenanas. The custom used to be for the sick one to put her tongue through a hole in the door or in the *purdah* for the *hakim* (doctor) to inspect. That was the only guide allowed him as to her ailment or condition; her hand he might not so much as touch. In those days mission women who had grown old in the service, and even young ones, must often have despaired of seeing any difference in their time, though their pluck and zeal were not to be daunted; but the leaven was working, and now these things are of the long past. Hard to move as India has ever been, I suppose

that it was hardest in the Zenanas, for the opposition met with there in every direction always came from the older women—the grandmothers of young India—who are all-powerful. To change their outlook was the object aimed at; to thwart this aim was theirs. Their ear once gained, the rest was easy.

Once, while staying at Secunderabad, a military cantonment of the Deccan, I with others paid a visit to the Zenana of one of the great nobles at Hyderabad, three miles away. The rooms were richly yet tawdrily furnished with many useless lumbering pieces of furniture in magnificently carved blackwood[1] which stood about pointlessly. The gilt-framed mirrors were of common glass, distorting everything, while the faces and forms of the women they should have reflected faithfully were, some of them, truly lovely; fair, too, even to a European eye. We were told they were Georgians and Circassians.

It was very delightful to be able to gaze unrestrainedly at so much beauty without being thought the least rude, and, indeed, they stared as frankly at us. While these ladies treated us with perfect courtesy, they could not conceal their intense curiosity, especially as to our clothes, though their own were far more beautiful really, and probably more costly, as well. They scrutinised and appraised all we had on, and as some of them spoke quite good English it was amusing, but embarrassing, when they picked out with acumen the best shoes of one or the best hat of another, even extending their remarks to our petticoats and stockings, and asking us what price they were. Fashion-plates were lying about, so they had a standard of comparison.

We all received some gift—strings of pearls, turquoises, etc.; and we had taken little presents ourselves, such as fancy boxes of bon-bons, but of those we saw plenty there already.

[1] *Dalbergia latifolia*, an Indian tree, the rosewood of commerce.

Several of the ladies could and did read, so they must have come to know something of the narrowness of their lives compared with ours, and must, I should think, have chafed at their limitations. Many black slave-girls moved about among their mistresses, and I could not but recall the stories I had heard, and which I knew to be not one whit exaggerated, though we saw nothing painful. Nevertheless, it was on the whole a saddening visit, and I never wished to repeat it. 'The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty,' and few places were darker at one time than the dim rooms behind the Zenana lattices.

On leaving India the main impressions one carries away are those of her gorgeousness and her cruelties; and, together with her treacheries, the dog-like fidelity of her people, once that be evoked. This is evidenced so often amongst one's own servants in their blind devotion, given in return for the slightest consideration and kindness. They will stop for days and weeks on guard at a sick-room door, faithfully seeing to it that medicines are to hand to the moment; and so cautious are they as to the food the cook prepares that they will force him to taste everything before it is given to the invalid. All that lies in their power they will do, and at these times may be trusted with property and money unreckoned. This we have proved.

It may be that I have dwelt on the cruelties of India with too much detail for the hypersensitive; yet it should be possible to read of what other people endure. Her gorgeousness must be seen to be realised; it can hardly be depicted, and cannot be exaggerated. Before visiting Hyderabad an expression often used to describe India and other Eastern lands—'the Gorgeous East'—seemed to me no more than a phrase; afterwards I recognised it as only a plain truth, happily worded.

There are two Hyderabads: one is the capital of Sindh, in the Bombay Presidency; the other is the name of the

Nizam's dominions—a feudatory kingdom in that part of Central India called the Deccan, which is bounded on the north by the Penganga, and on the south by the Kistna, rivers, Hindustan proper being all India lying to the north of that. The capital, of the same name—Hyderabad—is a Mussulman city with a grand mosque, on the model of that containing the Kaaba at Mecca, and with a population of over 10,200,000. This is the Hyderabad I knew. The British Residency is situated just beyond the walls. Entertainments are often given to English residents, military and civil, of Secunderabad by His Royal Highness the Nizam, or to give him his full title, Nizam-ul Mulk (Regulator of the State). I have been present at many such. On these occasions the native princes and noblemen were literally hung with 'barbaric pearl and gold' worth, to the eye of an expert, many thousands of pounds. Their jewels do not, however, show to the best advantage according to our ideas, not, as a rule, being cut in facets as with us, but *en cabochon*, that is, rounded or squared, and polished only; sometimes not even polished. Still, that very roughness has its charm, hinting at possibilities of unrevealed splendour.

Some of the court children looked as if they could hardly walk under the weight of their own magnificence. One beautiful boy that I especially remember, a princeling of seven years, who shook hands with us graciously with a regal air, was trailing after him a four-foot sword damascened with gold. His tiny hand—such a delicately cared for one, with henna-stained nails—rested on the hilt, which was a blaze of rubies. He was dressed to his heels in a black velvet coat, so heavily embroidered with gold thread that scarcely any groundwork was to be seen, and his little person was agleam with jewels. A king's ransom hung round his neck, and a great emerald was fastened in the small black velvet cap without which he would not have let himself be seen in public. He did not look to me a very happy little

fellow, but he may have been only bored, and certainly we were in no position to judge. His august father, who was not half so fine as he, was evidently proud of him.

The Nizam's palace was a wonderful place, and the strange contrasts to be seen everywhere were simply ludicrous. Marble floors and shocking mirrors; exquisite furniture and the crudest of pictures; ceilings decorated with dozens of large green and red glass globes, hanging singly as though they were art treasures—the kind only meant for Christmas trees, except that these were as large as footballs, very likely made especially for the Nizam. One room was furnished entirely in glass, the tables, chairs, sofas, and footstools all running on gilded castors on a glass floor, and all quite solid-looking but uninviting. They had been made for His Royal Highness in Vienna, and though we were far from admiring the idea, we could say truthfully that it was very wonderful.

Another vast apartment was fitted up with nothing but ivory and malachite, great slabs of the latter forming the tops of tables; and here the contrast was lovely.

Seeing ivory used in this lavish way made one think regretfully of the awful slaughter involved in obtaining such quantities; but the Eastern magnate counts the cost of nothing—certainly not that sort of cost—giving not a thought to it; for that matter, he thinks and does very little for himself at all.

There was no end to the rooms in this huge palace, and no comfort in any of them, to our thinking. One was severely destitute of any furniture whatever, apparently the better to display the beauty of its walls, which were of rich, glossy vermilion—charming enough but for the cheap crockery stuck all over them. Nor was there any fear of these treasures falling, every piece being embedded into the surface—cups, saucers, plates, and dishes of the kind seen on costers' barrows in England.

It is a curious fact that these jarring incongruities that set one's teeth on edge in Eastern palaces are found only when the native designers and artificers, who are true artists in their perception of form and colouring, depart from their own sphere; they can blend everything of their own production, and can even create. Curious it is, too, that all around is seen marvellous beauty of workmanship joined to the most horrifying animalism—indeed, brutality—in some of the designs. Most intricate and fine was the open-work carving of the blackwood furniture, of the ivories, the tortoise-shell, and other things; but a minute scrutiny was often impossible, so unspeakable were the subjects of all this delicate handiwork.

The cushioning of the sofas and chairs was covered with the flimsiest crimson or yellow brocaded satin of an unpleasant feeling, papery sort. And it is a strange thing, too, in connection with India's matchless needlecraft that it is done on such a coarse ground, gold and silver and exquisitely harmonised silks being embroidered on muslin or on common black calico that will hardly support the weight of the beautiful work; in contrast there with the equally fantastic loveliness of Chinese and Japanese creations, which are always worked upon a silken fabric worthy of such adornment, with both sides showing the same perfect finish.

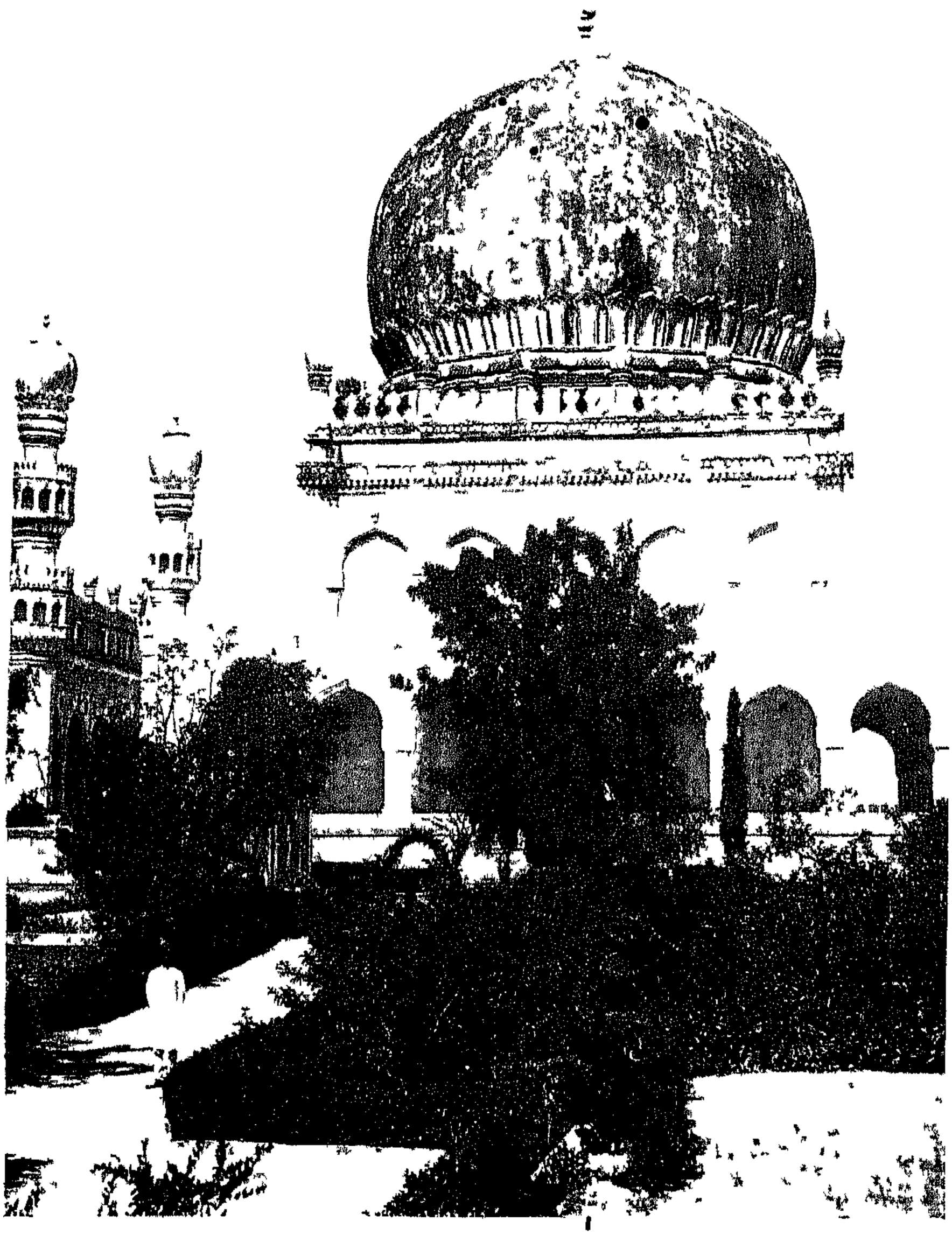
At native banquets, or rather those given in honour of English guests, the menu is somewhat of a trial, etiquette demanding that one eat, or at any rate taste, something of everything, in order to show that one has no suspicion of poisoning. For instance, a heaped-up plateful was put before me; it was *pillaiu* of kid, delicious to those who eat it in happy ignorance as to how that kid was procured, but to those who know, as I did, most horrible: the mother was killed before its birth.

The sweetmeats—*metais*—however are always delight-

ful, if mysterious. There are no rules as to not pocketing these, and it is considered a compliment if one ask permission to take some away, so I ventured the request; whereupon a packet was given me wrapped in gilt paper, and when we left we found such a parcel of these *metais* in the carriage! *Jellabies*, most fascinating of all, are composed of honey, rosewater, flour of some special grain, and butter—or *ghee*, the native form of it—boiled and strained with some other ingredient that I could never find out, but which makes all the difference to those rather ordinary materials. The mixture is fried in the shape of flat circles, something like curled macaroni, in pipes; what these pipes contain I cannot say, but it is a most delicately flavoured syrup, quite indescribable. To taste *jellabies* freshly made would be a revelation to a European confectioner. *Hulwa*, though quite different, is equally captivating. This is a paste of cream, nuts, camels' milk, and honey, also with something mysterious in its flavour which one could not name or even describe. *Hulwa* is like nougat in appearance, though in no other respect. There are many other sorts, but these two were my favourites; and one need not wait for an entertainment to get them, for they are to be bought in perfection in the bazaars everywhere.

At the close of these parties, while host and guests take leave of each other, attendants stand by with huge trays laden with gifts, one for each person, all receiving the same. Attar-of-rose, in delicate glass phials covered with gold tracery, was very often the gift, and a coveted one, this being the pure attar.

On one occasion, during the regency of Sir Salar Jung, H.R.H.'s Prime Minister, one of the guests, who had already passed out with his gift, contrived to come round a second time, thinking to receive a second gift; upon which Sir Salar, withholding his hand, and without an instant's hesitation, ordered the entire remaining trayful of attar to



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THE TOMBS AT GOLCONDA

be placed in 'this gentleman's carriage,' saying pointedly to him: 'These will last you till you be again invited to the palace of His Highness.' The other, taken aback at the prompt recognition, was dumbfoundered, and turned away, followed by the officials with the tray-load, and watched perhaps by some that were not ill-pleased to witness the discomfiture of a Feringhi (Englishman).

Those who saw this incident said that if that guest had thought himself very clever it was before he met the expression on Sir Salar Jung's fine face, an expression of lofty pity for such a mean-souled person, which was plainly to be read by all the onlookers, who considered him properly extinguished. Nobody was sorry for him, it being felt that a slur had been cast on English society; and his punishment was not over when he left the palace, for such disgrace is not easily forgotten.

Never was a finer gentleman than Sir Salar Jung; his bearing and accent were simply those of a cultured Englishman, and he was *persona grata* at the British Residency. His dress was of the plainest, and never a jewel; he always wore a long black velvet coat, like a cassock, and a velvet cap. Orders—no end—glittered on his breast, but not a ring on his fingers. If there be aught in hands, his betokened keen intellect, foresight, and grasp of authority, all necessary in a ruler of such a state as Hyderabad, where, amongst warring people and sects, sedition was always present below the surface; but he was their master. In his presence one felt that he was one of the men who make history—a power for good or ill. When he died, some years ago now, Englishmen knew that they had lost a friend.

It is scarcely necessary to say that we visited the famous tombs of Golconda, for no one leaves Hyderabad without seeing them. They have been described so often that any word of mine would be superfluous. Their surfaces are sadly denuded of the mosaics, softly yet brilliantly tinted,

of lapis-lazuli and marbles in minutest pieces which formerly adorned them, for many of them have fallen out with the lapse of ages—the tombs being coeval with the Pharaohs—many more have been knocked out by unscrupulous tourists.

Every one has seen pictures of these grand tombs surrounding the great mosque, with their symmetry of polished dome and gilded minaret. Yet it is not so much for the beauty of the tombs that I remember Golconda, as for the grand old priest standing at his place in the centre of the mosque, the Koran supported before him.

That ancient man, garbed in a long straight-falling white robe and heavy turban, with his snowy beard waving to his waist, and his features brown and chiselled, was one's ideal of a patriarch of old—a very Abraham. That name in its Eastern form of Ibrahim is to this day most usual.

We had removed our shoes as requested on entering the vestibule of the mosque, and that venerable figure turned to greet us. His great horn spectacles, with shrewd, kindly eyes behind them, suited his face, in the lofty expression of which there was simplicity and dignity, combined with the calm of a deep thinker and scholar. I shall never forget him.

Keeping a long patrician forefinger at the place in his book, he spoke to us in English as ready as our own. I had noticed that there were two books, one within the other. The great one was the Koran, bound in white vellum; the other—and it gave me a distinct shock—was a novel of Miss Braddon's! Several of us had seen this, and our eyes met each other's; they also met those of the old gentleman, for he smiled, and said he was enjoying it. 'Had we read it?' He then turned round and read aloud a paragraph in good, if careful, English in the sonorous, musical tone of his race. He told us that he wearied of reading the Koran, knowing it by heart as he did, and that he could always

repeat it to himself—could do so mechanically out loud to his hearers, while reading or letting his eye run along the pages of some other book, as now. After this frankness on his part we all felt quite at home with the old gentleman, though the solemnity of the visit seemed rather dashed. He shook hands with us all, saying he had friends among the 'Infidels' whom he much esteemed; that he had been born a Moslem, but had acquired through study a preference for the 'Infidels'' creed, which he held in his heart; that he kept it there, not meaning ever to disturb the faith of others, who, not having read as he had, would 'lose anchorago' (his very words) were they aware of his change of faith. That old priest hangs, a conspicuous figure, in my gallery of memory portraits.

Another well-remembered but very different sight in Hyderabad was the magenta-coloured tails and manes of the horses. Such horses! and so shockingly bitted! But bearing-reins and blinkers were not to be seen there except occasionally, in imitation of English ways; and the velvet mouths may have had to accustom themselves to those bits and curbs from colthood.

The people's beards, too! A Mussulman's beard is his glory; to be plucked by it would be lasting shame. He dyes it red, an orange red, not covertly, but as a worthy act.

The sights in the gutters—if gutters they can be called where all is gutter—were haunting in their horror. Scarcely was there carriage width in the streets of the city itself. The *baksheesh* (alms) we showered broadcast as we passed was clawed at by professional mendicants for themselves, or begged by attendants upon objects such as must have inspired Gustave Doré's illustrations of Dante's *Inferno*.

One of these was set up on the roadway, being without legs, and covered up with a cloth. It begged for itself, but being also without arms, a bowl for donations supported

on iron hooks rested on its chest; and when the attendant, who seemed to be there to exhibit this wreck of humanity to remind passers-by what they might come to, and live, twitched off the merciful, veiling cloth, a sight was disclosed which one would much rather have been spared It was in my mind to ask how it got about, for there was nothing to be seen that might serve for its conveyance; that turned out, however, to be quite a simple matter. Local charity was too much used to such sights to pay much attention; besides, the people were all agape at us, so the attendant—I saw him do it—picked up that fragment of a man, dropped it into a bag, and hoisted it over his shoulder, without any sound from within, so one might hope that no additional discomfort was experienced there by this mode of *exit*.

As for cripples and specimens of mere deformities, there is no end to them; not begging, but hobbling and limping about their business, well aware that their deficiencies being nothing out of the common, they could not expect many pice. No bazaar or street is complete without these eyesores by the dozen; doubtless it is the same in other countries, but I only answer for India. The legless ones use a little cart running on two tiny wooden wheels, and urge themselves along cleverly by means of a pair of short staves. I noticed a quartette of such beings playing cards in a verandah, well-fed, comfortable-looking people—what there was of them. That happened to be in a town on my own familiar west coast, which is second to none for unpleasant sights.

Some of these deformities and monstrosities are born so, some become so accidentally—or otherwise. I must explain how this latter comes about. It is claimed that the idea originated in Burmah, but soon spread. As soon as a child is born they put it into an earthenware mould, not of the baby's shape, but of a fanciful one—flattened here, bulging there, with outlets for ventilation. In this it must live and

grow as it best can, its adult shape being determined by the mould in which it was made to begin life. There will be no cramping or stunting—the better grown and healthier the better value—only the little growing body must expand where it can, repressing itself elsewhere. The face is generally left free, and the feet normally placed, but obviously if the shape did not vary considerably from the natural human form the aim proposed would be defeated. The process is not a painful one—so we were assured—and the mere act of growing being an unconscious one, it may be all one in what direction legs and arms develop, provided they have space allowed them somewhere. An arm may sprout out of the side; or the chest be turned half-way round to the back, the body being a series of hollows and excrescences. All that eccentricity is not necessarily painful, nor was it so in the making, judging by the appearance of health in the finished productions—an appearance not to be simulated. Parents with a far-seeing eye have found that they could thus provide an easy means of livelihood for themselves, and for their child if it should be orphaned; not everybody would know it to be an artificial creation, nor could the child itself be blamed in any case. Perhaps this may be thought to be invention, or at least exaggeration. Not so. I have been told that it is literally true, and most assuredly some of the objects I have seen in native bazaars would seem to prove it.

There is one thing to be said, natives of India certainly are extraordinarily kind to afflicted persons—too kind, some might think—keeping them alive as long as ever they can, against all reason and common-sense: witness the example at Hyderabad. Their very name for idiots is a beautiful one; they call them 'God's animals'; and one and all vie with each other in their endeavour to serve the imbecile creatures. There is no jeering or stone-throwing at the idiot boy or childish old man, such as every one must have seen

nearer home. I have done so, and have thought that perhaps those natives, degraded in many ways as they are, strike a higher note than we. In these cases, however, very likely their consideration is partly due to a desire to propitiate the *Shaitan* (devil) who brought the idiocy about.

CHAPTER XX

Tigers: Madras and Bengal methods—Dog gets in tiger's way—Sleeping tiger—Tiger and wild boar compared—Fanny—Two 'near shaves'—Mooniappa—Claws of panthers and tigers—A man-eater's patience—F. face to face with a man-eater.

In Indian *shikar*, tiger expeditions are held by almost everybody to stand first, but that was not my husband's idea nor that of all his friends; for I have listened to discussions between them, experienced shots every one, in which some declared for tiger as being the only sport worth the name; others belittling it as, in many cases, no real sport at all, but a matter of beaters and clever dogs. F.'s own most highly prized trophies were his bison heads, which represented to his mind the better sport, so wily, so patient must a man be who would circumvent a bull bison.

As to tigers, the Madras way is to go after them on foot, that being possible there, as the grass never attains the great height that it does in Bengal, where elephants are used, the sportsmen being seated in howdahs on their backs. A tiger has been known to drag a man from his place, and an elephant to bolt when one has fastened on his flank, but such instances are rare; for elephants can be brought to perfection here, as in everything else to which they are put, being trained to stand like statues, abiding the onslaught, guided by their *mahouts*—men who do not know fear.

F.'s practice, on getting *khubber* of a tiger, was to start out in a bamboo shooting-cart, a thing warranted never to upset. Not wishing to be selfish, if time permitted he would have asked a friend to accompany him; he would also take a man to look after the spare rifles: nor would the

tiffin basket be forgotten. They would, perhaps, travel a couple of days in this way. Sometimes a dog or two would be with them—not always; it depended on the sort of cover there might be and the ground to be traversed. We had eight spaniels, who were the smartest little dogs possible for tiger; they would so bewilder him by their impudent barking, leaping and snapping at his heels, that he did not know what to be at or which to attack, as there seemed to be no beginning or end to them. They knew, to an inch, how near they might venture to the death-dealing paw, a touch from which would have laid low any heedless one. That happened once. A very daring dog did get a blow on the hind leg, which rolled her over, but she was pluckily snatched up by a beater and borne away into camp, where the smashed leg was set. It mended in six joints, so was never of much use to her afterwards, as she could not stand on it, and trailed it along, though without pain. Her tiger days were, of course, over. She was none the less beloved for that!

On reaching the neighbourhood of the tiger's reputed lie-up, the cart would be left with the *syce* that the tracking might be done very warily on foot. Sometimes the tiger would be found at a moment when he was not being searched for, as once when F. and his friend were beetle-hunting. Fortunately the Mussulman peon with them, not so keen on beetles, had kept a lookout; he stopped dead, and touched them silently, for there, barring their path, in the shade of a fallen tree trunk, lay a tiger, full stretched and sound asleep, taking his noonday siesta.

To waken him the peon flung his slipper right in his face. The insult roused him, and he got on his feet, yawning and looking round to see whence the disturbance arose. The very instant his eyes fell on the three men and the rifles pointing at him his temper rose. He gathered himself together, and with an earth-shaking roar made his charge,

but fell short, shot in air by F.'s friend, who as guest had been previously signalled to take first place. Had the aim been faulty, or the cartridge missed fire or jammed, as cartridges will, F.'s rifle was also ready, the trophy belonging in that case (according to sportsman law) to whichever of the two men drew first blood. But no need; the rifle 'spoke,' as the natives say, and its leaden message reached the tiger's brain through his eye, so that not a single hole marred the perfect skin.

Men need to be steady at such work; those who go afoot after tiger must have their armoury from within: a nerve that nothing can startle, pluck that never quails, hands that never tremble, eye and judgment that never miscalculate, and aim unerring—it is fatal to be second-rate in any of these things.

Not that a tiger is such a very brave beast, rather the reverse; for many a less magnificent animal could give him points. With his looks his kingly qualities end. The wild boar, hideous as he is, yet not without a savage grandour of his own, is a foe much more to be respected. The tiger, if he miss his charge, will not renew it. Failure cowes him; he slinks back, as it were, morally vanquished, so ashamed of himself is he. But the boar scorns hiding or skulking. Wounded to the death or not, he will come on and on again while there is breath in him, ripping up dog after dog, and men too. Never will he say die, nor does he know when he is beaten. He can wheel round in his own length, and, awkward as he appears, is as quick as lightning. Seldom does he die unavenged. You may get him at the finish, but at the cost of a dog or two; for to a certainty, even if none are killed outright, there will be sorry, gaping wounds to be sewn up then and there if it can possibly be done. To minor scratches the game pack pay little heed, and straggle home limp enough if it has been anything of a tussle, but always on the alert till they may close their eyes

by the camp fire, limbs and muscles relaxed, and resting while they dream of coming supper.

One morning I was roused at three or four o'clock to get out needle and silk and carbolised dressings for a heroine who had been badly worsted in the fray. The account given me—that the boar lay dead, but in dying had ripped up this unwary dog—was so upsetting that I went with the messenger to learn if there were any hope. Only the hairy skin was actually touched, but that was cut as though with a knife by the boar's keen tushes; the stomach itself was uninjured, or we could not have saved her. This was supported while every particle of earth and foreign substance was washed away, then replaced carefully, and the edges of the skin sewn together. I sat on the ground with her head and shoulders resting on my lap, so that her sides could be firmly pressed while the stitches were put in. Under this operation she never struggled, hardly winced, but kept as still as still could be, looking up and backwards at me now and again, though fixing her gaze mostly on F., who was always surgeon. Well she knew that the best possible was being done for her; but a world of question lay in her eyes, as if she were wondering why she must suffer to minister to our pleasures—most pathetic had we not known that this dog, Fanny, apart from her accident, had been enjoying herself mightily; for sport of any sort was always to her mind, and she was game to the core.

The eyes of all dogs seem to suggest a sad outlook on the world from the deep sombreness of their expression, and this whether there be any reason for it or not. In the case of our dogs there certainly was none, and no one of them enjoyed life more thoroughly than did the hapless Fanny, temporarily placed *hors de combat*—for it was only temporarily. Great care had to be taken as to her food, which was the chief trouble, for she never lost appetite. Water was what she mostly craved for, and it was just the thing

which she could be given but sparingly; nor could she be allowed any of her accustomed rice, that being too filling, so she had to be content with the best meat jellies. She would have recovered sooner than she did, only when almost well, and not so rigidly watched, she managed to get at something when the other dogs were feeding, and overate herself, so that the stitches burst out, and the rent had to be sewn up again. Things had quite righted themselves internally then—so complaisant sometimes is Nature—but outwardly all was now to do again, and the food-watch had to be redoubled. However, in the end she recovered completely, and lived to meet with the very same sort of mishap again, though wild boars being her special business (and pleasure) that was not so surprising, and this time she made an even quicker recovery.

Another day—also when after pig—F.'s cartridge got fixed, that being the worst thing that can befall—at a crisis, too. He was caught and pinned to a tree by his clothes, and must have been ripped up himself next minute but for the timely intervention of his *shikar* companion and best-loved friend, who saved the situation by forcing his huge hunting-knife down the boar's throat. The animal did fall back at that, and received a bullet to finish. In the flash of an instant it had been judged unwise to fire, with F. and the boar so closely locked; but the treacherous foothold of slippery, trampled grass affording no purchase made the knife stroke also hazardous, when the issue hung on the turn of a wrist, steeled though it was by the knowledge that a swerve meant failure, and failure meant death, or at best frightful hurts, to both men.

The same friend was in a fix himself once when they were out together from something going wrong with his rifle, and the panther they were after was upon them, all three struggling in a heap together, when F. managed to shove his Express between its jaws and down the throat, and so

fired. It keeled over dead. Again the shave was a narrow one.

When a man's weapon fails him, and it comes to grips, all the advantage is with the animal. Then woe to him if he has not a friend at hand! Between this pair of friends there was none of the jealousy that is more apt to crop up in *shikar* matters than perhaps in anything else; not that decent people would leave each other in the lurch, whatever their grievances might be, but men have been known to start out together amicably and to return separately—in a huff.

Notwithstanding the many risks and dangers of *shikar*, fatal catastrophes are comparatively rare. Once, however, a trip was badly marred by a grievous accident. One of our people, Mooniappa [1] by name, having in the course of his life killed his panther, and never got over his pride in the achievement, had made himself a cap out of the fur. In spite of warnings to keep this cap out of sight when camping lest one fine day it should be the death of him, besides being upsetting to the younger dogs, he could not resist parading in it, till at last he did so once too often; for Mr. O.—a friend shooting with F.—catching a glimpse of panther hide through the leaves, blazed at it. It was a foolhardy thing to do in any case; for had a panther been there, on feeling stung he would have speedily taken revenge, unless he had been quieted then and there for ever, the chances being a thousand to one against a head shot. But the bit of yellow and black fur dropped, and Mr. O., seeing no stir, nor hearing the expected roar, made sure he had killed dead—as indeed he had. But his glee was short-lived, for on pushing through the bushes he found that the fur was only the cap on Mooniappa's head, and the man lay shot before him. He must have been going on his hands and knees—after something himself, perhaps—and it brought him near enough to panther level. Any one might have

[1] Mooniappa = son of Mooni (Tamil).

made the mistake Mr. O. did; the real wrong was in firing at all, haphazard. Besides, had a 'panther of the woods' been there, and not a man, it would have been the height of folly to go and see what effect the shot had taken in that casual way; for, though making no sign, and seemingly dead, it might only have been lying low. Leave such an animal alone, and you are safe; wound him, and beware! Unless prepared at all points, finger on trigger and luck on his side, a man who approaches rashly may count on a mauling if a pulse of life yet beat in his victim. All of which was explained to Mr. O. for his good. Sometimes people do recover from such maulings, but very seldom if they have fallen under the claws of a panther, every claw being laden with pyæmia. Those of a tiger, on the contrary, may score as deeply—clothes being a sorry protection—even tear out the muscles and reach the bone, but there is no vice in them, so to speak; they wound cleanly, and, given a good constitution, the hurt is quite likely to heal up without any consequences. The reason of this is that though both animals are cats, the one is a clean feeder, the other the reverse. Even the bite or scratch of the house cat is generally supposed to be fraught with risk owing to its fondness for unsavoury rakings.

The son of a friend of ours lost his life in an encounter with a panther, being clawed down from a tree into which he had climbed after having, either from nervousness or inexperience, only succeeded in wounding the animal; forgetting, too, or perhaps being unaware, that panthers can climb like squirrels. That is another reason why a man should be sure of himself before he adventures his life in their vicinity. A tiger will not climb a tree, but he has patience enough to wait at the foot till his quarry drops from fatigue and exhaustion, so there is little to choose between them. An example of the unwearying patience of the tiger was shown by the fate that befell a native *shikari*

known to F., though his was not a case of climbing a tree as a last desperate and futile effort, nor of dropping exhausted from a place of safety. Nevertheless, he was waited for long and perseveringly. The man was a native of Kurnool, a huge district, to which my husband was gazetted later on as Forest Officer, in which the villages are widely scattered, vegetation sparse owing to anscanty rainfall, and game scarce. A water famine was the rule rather than the exception, and to alleviate the consequent distress a rich and benevolent Brahmin had had an Artesian well sunk, and a drinking fountain put up for the refreshment of wayfarers, as the most lasting thank-offering he could make for a daughter's restoration to health. This fountain was a landmark for miles, and was placed just where many intersecting tracks crossed the main road, the boon being much appreciated. But it happened once, during a season of special drought, that the refreshing water attracted one wayfarer who barred the road to all others, namely, a man-eating tiger. This creature, after having terrorised the country round in all directions, settled down here as his headquarters, the forest through which the road was cut affording him shelter enough, though he was not particular about hiding himself, for he had been seen to cross the open and lap his fill at the trough in broad daylight. The trough was of no use now to any one but him, for no one dared pass near it by day, far less by night. Thus, with all to his advantage, the tiger became so bold as to actually seize children and race off with them before people's eyes. Grown-up persons were also taken. He would show his dreadful face at the open doorways of village houses. Traps set ever so cunningly never deceived him, for no bait they could place in them was of a kind to tempt him, and dead bait would not do, even if of the right sort; he preferred to do his own hunting, travelling miles in a night. When it is remembered that a tiger's beat is anything from fifty to seventy miles,

and that he might be seen in the morning as far as that from the place where he was certified to have been the previous evening, it can be readily understood that there was no telling his whereabouts at any particular moment. No man would work alone in the fields, and even parties kept watch on all sides, leaving off while the sun was yet high if they had any distance to go; for their homes must be reached before dusk, when somewhere—who know where?—the enemy would begin to open his sleepy eyes, yawn, and stretch himself, preparing to scent around for his supper.

At last things had come to such a pass that our *shikari* made a vow that it should be the tiger's life or his, and the drinking-trough settled the point as to where to set up his watch. It was overhung by a big shady tree, and amongst the screening boughs he had a commodious *machan* constructed; there he would live, without coming down, for a fortnight, taking with him food enough to last that time. Water he could draw up for himself. The tiger must come to drink, then would be his opportunity. But he never did come! The depredations ceased; not so much as a goat was missed, and that hollow roar which used to wake such fearsome echoes in the rocky ground about—no one heard that any more either. From the day that the devoted *shikari* stationed himself in the tree there was not a sign of the tiger; so the people plucked up heart, even to fetching water, and chatting with their hero, coming and going safely. 'Ah, it was a cunning tiger,' they said, 'and he had scented danger, perhaps he had even seen the man and his gun waiting for him, and had betaken himself while he might to safer quarters. The *shikari's* very presence had rid them of their enemy, and the water was now their own again; for though a tiger could stand a long starvation, thirst he could not endure, and he would have to seek water. Everybody knew that, so no better proof was needed that he was really gone.'

A fortnight and a day the man stayed up in the tree; on that last day—the fifteenth—the people, who now came and went as they listed, were to bring him away and make much of him, for he had kept his word to them as far as he could; so he climbed down to be ready for them, and stooped over the trough to take a drink. At that very instant, in the face of the approaching crowd of friends, the tiger came out from the edge of the forest, swung himself across the road, picked up the *shikari* in his jaws, and walked back with him to cover in a leisurely manner, not even taking the trouble to lay a paw on his prey. Numbed, paralysed, with his spine, perhaps, snapped, the man was carried off as limp as ever a dead mouse by a cat. All were agreed as to that; also that not the faintest sound was heard then or afterwards.

No one now dared dispute the tiger's right to the trough; but, all unknown to him and to the unhappy people, the days of his career were numbered, for very shortly after this, while the tale was still fresh in men's minds and mouths, F. arrived to take up his appointment in Kurnool.

To F. such an affair waiting for him to negotiate it was enough to make any 'desert blossom as the rose'—and Kurnool was not much better than a desert in parts; only, as I have said, it was a huge district. There was always plenty of work in a new charge, but that work, while following its ordinary and accustomed routine, was here spiced with the special zest of a possible lurking danger. This would not be to everybody's mind, nor was it, I believe, to that of all whose duties forced them to accompany their master wherever his business might take him.

As a general rule, F. and others of kindred spirit who were with him, once the quarry at their feet, felt only regret that all was over, the acquisition of a trophy being a very secondary consideration. Here, however, the sooner an

end the better, for one man-eater to a district was one too many. Still, it was passing strange, unless a case of *toujours perdrix*, that none of the usual stories as to this or that person being missing came in. A few head of cattle, goats, etc., disappeared, but these were losses to which everybody was used; besides, such prey was not in this tiger's line. Possibly he had betaken himself to some far distant part of the country where the people would not be so much on their guard against him, a sort of pulse he knew very well how to test; or, better still, he might be dead. So it went on for quite two months, with complete dearth of news, and nothing done as far as the man-eater was concerned, and perhaps as a consequence vigilance was unconsciously relaxed. Nevertheless, though nobody guessed it, things were getting into train.

One afternoon, about four o'clock, F. and a peon, carrying a shot-gun apiece, went out to shoot pea-fowl, which were then coming daily in flocks to feed upon the ripening millet, a grain these birds are very fond of, and of which there was a field close to our camp. Beyond the field was a belt of forest, on the edge of which stood a number of charcoal-burners' huts, disused and ruinous, with the millet and high grass growing up close all round them. Into one of these F. and the peon went to hide and wait in silence for the birds and for their chatter to begin, there being plenty of peep-holes in the cracked mud walls through which they could watch unseen. They had not been waiting a quarter of an hour before they distinctly heard a low sound of purring close by, on the side of the hut farthest from the doorway. It was recognised simultaneously by both; for when F. turned to the peon he saw him crouching in a corner, his face livid and his nerve completely gone, as he muttered, '*Bagh, Sahib. Bagh!*' ('Tiger, master. Tiger!') Tiger it was, and both instinctively knew that it was *the* tiger; no other would have crept after them to stop alongside and let

himself be heard in that deep, full purr of contentment—a cat's very own, with her prey under her paw.

Listening intently in order to locate the sound, which was stationary, F. peered through the hole he judged to be opposite the spot whence it proceeded, and made out the face he expected to see in amongst, and all of a colour with, the blades and stalks of grass standing up round it, not three yards away. Noiselessly lifting his gun, he rested it on the broken edge of the hole, meaning to let drive on the least movement in the grass; though but a charge of shot, it would be blinding at such close quarters. He then ordered the peon, rather brutally, but for his good, to 'get up instantly and go while the chance remained, otherwise he would leave him there to be eaten; for the tiger knew there were two of them.' None of F.'s men ever doubted his word, or that he could and would do as he said, so the rough threat had its intended effect; it got the peon, half-dead with fright, on to his feet, and sent him off.

The man gone, F. felt more free. There was only one thing for him to do now—keep his eyes glued on a special blade of grass behind which lay his lurking enemy for as long as he could see it, at the same time backing himself out of the hut. He said afterwards that he never intended to fire unless forced to it, as a last and, as he knew, hazardous expedient; besides, it was contrary to a sportsman's principles ever to disable an animal without following it up, if it could possibly be avoided, except in a case of dire necessity, with a human life at stake—one's own or that of another. He said, too, that all along, from the start, two thoughts were prominent in his mind: one of furious anger against himself for being caught in such a fix with no better weapon than a shot-gun, for it was just that that made it a fix at all; had the double Express been in his hand instead, the 'fix' would have been such a chance as a man need never hope to get twice in a lifetime. The other thought was of

surprise that any animal so cute as a tiger should have shown less *nous* in his choice of position than an ordinary cat would have done. *She* would have watched at the mouse's hole; it was a good thing that he did not. But then, again, was it really stupidity? No tiger ever yet wanted for *nous*; far more likely this one acted as he did as the outcome of crafty logic. A man-eater prefers to strike from behind; he would never have entered the hut, fearing a snare, but intended to steal round when the prey was leaving to make his attack.

It was quite a small hut, and with a few backward paces F. was out and able to breathe freely. He said that while in there the feeling of being trapped was unnerving to a degree that no danger in the open could have equalled; so, keeping a sharp lookout to right and left, the gun steadily pointing and finger and eye ready, he ploughed his way backwards through the millet, which stood so thick that it would have hidden anything that might have been following till it was awkwardly near—the knowledge of that fact adding its quota to the burden of an already overcharged mind. However, camp was safely reached without sound or stir on the part of the tiger. In spite of this, F. said that his impression as to the creature's identity was unaltered. His proximity and self-assured purring were proof enough of his original intention. It was only misliking the look of the steel barrel facing him through the hut wall that made him change his mind, and when it seemed to be removed he probably shifted himself as soon as he dared, and stole away, just as he had come, with the tread of a cat. Therefore, to be quite fair, the despised shot-gun would seem to have done its part, like the mouse in the fable.

Such was F.'s reading of an affair which occupied but an hour all told—a long hour, as he and the peon agreed; and there must be few people who do not find out for themselves at least once in the course of their lives how long

an hour can be, when time seems independent of the clock.

Talking things over afterwards in the security of the camp firelight, somebody remarked that it was 'a flattish ending to a promising start,' but F. said that he took it to be the beginning, not the ending, and that he felt keyed up to anything; the tiger had only postponed himself, and he thought he would be heard of before long. His words were recalled later on by every one present.

Next morning the peon's abandoned gun was fetched away from where it was lying on the ground of the hut, for, almost past carrying himself as the man had been, F. had not allowed him to carry his gun in nerveless hands that might just have contrived to precipitate matters, and bring hut and tiger about their ears. Of the tiger no trace was to be seen in evidence of yesterday's story beyond the line of crushed grass leading right up to the forest, which, so far, kept its own secret.

CHAPTER XXI

Mode of progression with a man-eater about—A gruesome discovery—The man-eater's end—General rejoicings—Little herd-boys and tigers—Native *shikaris*—Murder under cover of tiger—Epicurism of tigers—Fate of a Brahmin—A mad gallop—A tiger and a father—Night in a *machan*—A *mauvais quart d'heure*—Trophies.

FOREST operations must obviously be carried out in forests; so when a tiger of ill-fame is more than suspected of being about, it is necessary for the men engaged in them to take special precautions while moving from one part to another. The plan often adopted is that one leads the way, others place themselves in a double row back to back, and edge along sideways, while the one who brings up the rear walks backwards. Thus keen eyes range every avenue of approach. This was what they did now, F. generally being the end man; but people cannot always move about in gangs, and work was hindered. Had he been alone, or with one choice companion, probably he would have enjoyed himself mightily, but not as it was; for this tiger was becoming an incubus—the unknown quantity in all his plans and calculations. And it was of no use to look for him; that were only to search for the proverbial needle. The fact that no missing folk were reported was nothing to go by, or only negative proof at best. But things have their own way of coming about; and while the man-eater was still to seek, in no one place more than another, one fine day he dropped into F.'s hands!

Riotous, indeed, was the *tamasha*[1] at sundown on that day, for the news spread like wildfire, and from far and near

[1] Festivities.

the happy people came thronging in. The rejoicings began when their arch-enemy lay prone before them, and were at flood-tide with the skinning; but I am going on too fast.

That morning F., accompanied as usual by a peon, had set out on some forest work, both carrying rifles—there was no stirring anywhere without them now—and had not gone any farther than the charcoal-burners' huts when they suddenly came upon a tangled mass of very long black hair, and a quantity of coloured glass bangles, such as native women wear by dozens on their arms, lying broken and strewn about where they had been freshly vomited up. Moreover, a moment's look round showed where the grass had been pushed aside and pressed down by something being dragged over it; a sickly odour, too, hung about the place. Following these indications, they presently discovered the half-eaten body of a woman. All question as to the tiger's whereabouts was thus answered in an instant. He was now within bow-shot, fast asleep, repleted—what they saw proved that; he would come back for his next meal, though it was not bound to be that same day. If not roused he would perhaps sleep on into the next; in any case, he was unlikely to stir for some hours. All was plain sailing now. F. and the peon having securely rigged up a *machan* with a good screen of branches all round it in a tree over against the 'kill,' and noted certain landmarks to ensure being able to find it again without mistake, went back to camp to supply themselves with food and drink in case they might have to spend the night in the *machan*; for the less the ground were walked over the better.

Astonishingly little fuss was ever made over these affairs. F. was sure of his rifles, sure of himself, and he would take care that only one who could be trusted shared his watch; in this case it was the man who was with him in the morning. They started off again about three-thirty, so as to be beforehand, and found all as they had left it, only the

odour was heavier in the burning heat—that was all. As a rule, when shooting from a tree, it was F.'s habit to mask all traces of footsteps with earth, leaves, etc., but here it was unnecessary; there was enough of the human already. He confessed afterwards that they had found it desperately sickening to have the gnawed body lying below them awaiting a horrible sepulture, and he had sworn to himself that it should not be so if he could prevent it—nor was it; they buried the poor fragments instead.

Such plans do not always work out according to intention, but to-day the man-eater's 'number was up.' About five o'clock he appeared, and settled himself beneath the tree in placid good-humour and anticipation. As tigers go, this one was not especially handsome—his sort seldom are—but he was no more than full grown, with many years of nefarious life before him had he not come up against an Express bullet.

Those in camp were near enough to hear one reverberating shot, which was not repeated; and for them, in their uncertainty as to whether that shot had given the desired quietus, or whether the tables had perhaps been turned, the screw began to get unbearably tight. However, everybody knew 'before long,' as F. had prophesied; knew, too, that the tiger lay harmless now beside his latest victim.

Presently the body was slung to a pole and borne away in the midst of a crowd of wildly jubilant people, who, as soon as it was set down again in the camp, began reviling it, spitting at it, and slandering every one of his ancestors and relations after their usual fashion.

No longer might the forest keep its secret; convincing evidences, more than enough, came to light the very next morning, when it was searched over, that it had been, as was expected by then, a stronghold of the tiger for many a day.

So long had this creature held the people in thrall that

the new and unwonted freedom to move about anywhere—singly even if they chose, and as they seemed especially to rejoice in doing—had an almost intoxicating effect upon their spirits. Only those who know what it is to go in fear of their lives day after day, from whatever cause, can in the very least degree realise the relief of that burden lifted.

Even when not a man-eater, a tiger must certainly be reckoned a fearsome beast. Most people would be afraid of him—nor ashamed to own it—but not all. Little naked herd-boys do not fear him ; on the contrary, he is afraid of them. A stick brandished in the hand of one of these fearless imps will drive him off, and all the village riches, in the shape of goats, buffaloes, bullocks, etc., are given into their charge to see that they graze safely while possibly watched for by hungry eyes. These children sit about on the hillsides, or on the arm of some solitary old dead tree, the better to see all round, playing on reed pipes and shouting shrilly to one another. As many as two hundred animals will very likely be under the care of one boy, and though it is not often that they have anything to do but play about, still they must never forget their business, which is to keep an eye on every one of the flock and prevent its straying too far. Nor do the animals themselves want for sense ; they know there is safety in numbers, and keep pretty close round their guardian ; while the marauders, too, know that they need be smart to catch a herd-boy napping.

Merry, skinny little brown mortals are these herd-boys, clad in some six inches of rag, and with one tuft of hair left on the crown of their shaven heads, in recognition of caste or some religious rite. Armed only with a stick, they are set to protect their countless charges against cunning savage beasts. Did these beasts only know it, such babes could offer no more resistance to an attack than so much thistledown ; but happily they do not know it ; to them

all human beings mean, if not bullets, arrows, traps, dangers of all sorts.

Even should there be any suspicion of a man-eater being about, these fearless children are at their posts to drive him off by shouts and cries, knowing well that he would not be after the goats but themselves. They would be sent out, too, even if there were serious grounds for such suspicions; the flocks must feed, and must be protected, and there is no one to protect them but these little fellows. Perhaps their mothers at home find comfort in the firm belief in Kismet, which all Eastern peoples hold—they have none other, poor things! Perhaps, too, the boys themselves keep within closer call and sight of each other, and have their herds more massed together, if there be such talk. So it goes on for a while, and nothing happens. The man-eater will bide his time, till one fine day a little chap is missing; then a child here and there out of the villages, or old people, or belated folk. A cry will be heard in the night perhaps, and such or such a one will never be seen again. That is what happens, and the terror grows in men's minds. All untouched are the flocks and herds; they might graze unguarded now; it is not them for whom the man-eater lies in wait. For a while he gets what he is after by night, till the villagers become too much terrified to be abroad then; but before long he takes toll by day. Some native *shikari* hears about it, and brings himself and his antiquated muzzle-loaders to the place. A notification is, perhaps, sent by him to the Forest or Police Officer of the district, and through him to the Government, who will, the *shikari* knows from experience, offer a small but growing reward for the destruction of the man-eater; and, as might be expected, he considers it the proper thing to wait till the maximum be reached—a child or two more or less, or a feeble person, would matter little. Were that maximum offered at the outset a week would probably see the end of the tiger, for more than one *shikari*

would be on his track. As it is, villages are allowed to be decimated and a whole countryside panic-stricken, sometimes for a year or more, before the career of the man-eater is stopped; not at all, as has been suggested, through faint-heartedness on the part of the *shikaris*. Whatever their faults, they do not lack courage; they only act in accordance with human nature. The ill-judged system of rewards, and nothing else, is the real cause of the long continuance of such a scourge; yet the Indian Government does not seem to have grasped the fact. As recently as 18th December 1909 a paragraph appeared in the *Daily Mail* stating that the Government reward had been raised from £16 to £70 in the space of three years for the slaying of a tiger still ravaging the villages of Gamjam, and that during that time he had killed upwards of a hundred and fifty people. How English sportsmen came to leave him alone at his hideous work it is hard to understand, for it is not to be supposed that the increased reward would be any incentive in their case; neither can it be possible that they would be afraid to hunt up the man-eater—at any rate, it used not to be so.

Then, again, it has happened before now that after the Government reward had been paid away, children and others were still carried off, the native champion having been so fortunate—'God is good,' he would say—as to light upon some other, and comparatively harmless, tiger that would serve his turn. He would shoot that, and produce the skin as his proof at the *Kutcheri*. One skin being much like another, to claim the reward and get it, none disputing his right, was simple enough. At the worst, he could always ask: 'How was he to know it was not the one wanted? Besides, there might be two man-eaters about,' which, if unlikely, was not impossible; 'he would go out again.'

Even a man-eating tiger may be slandered, and not seldom may the disappearance of unwanted people be conveniently accounted for by laying their death at his door, if the real

culprit be careful not to describe him as having been in one place at the same time that he had been seen in another.

Regarding the epicurism of tigers in general endless tales are told. Work-worn, sinewy old bullocks may go safely, so far as they are concerned, as long as better are to be had. And it is the same with human beings : anything may do at first, but not when a tiger gains practice and discernment ; then his daring passes belief, for he will carry off one person from amongst dozens of others. Of this a notable instance is said to have happened in Coorg. An enormously fat Brahmin gentleman had occasion to go upon a journey through a district suspected of harbouring a tiger of evil repute. This journey, it would seem, was imperative, so he engaged two or three local *shikaris* to travel with him ; also, for greater safety, instead of being carried in a litter, as became his rank, he had a travelling-carriage built, according to his own directions, of teak-wood strengthened with iron, and covered in with heavy wooden lattice-work. An army of attendants were bestowed in coaches and carts, and he saw to it that of all the drivers his was the leanest—one for whom a tiger would only feel contempt ; his coach, too, must be in the very middle of the procession, as presumably the safest place ; then, when everything had been thought of and arranged with a sole view to his protection, and he himself ensconced behind his barricades, the party set out. Yet, notwithstanding his precautions, the Brahmin himself was the very man to be picked out from amongst them all. A tiger came out of the forest and sprang upon the coach, sending woodwork and lattice flying ; he then dragged his prey out of it, and made off before anything could be done to stop him. Though I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, it is quite in accord with both Brahmin and tiger character, and was never called in question.

At one time we knew a young man whose business it was to superintend the making and upkeep of roads, bridges,

etc. He was not of the riding sort, and felt happier boxed up in a bullock-coach, or even jolted along in a country cart, than when forced by unkind circumstances to trust himself on a horse's back. Unluckily for him, the nature of his profession often took him into eerie places, bristling with that promise of adventure and novelty which is as the breath of life to some, but only inspired him with horror. He was not to blame. His bump of caution was so largely developed that a timely visit to a phrenologist might have saved him from being pitchforked into such a very unsuitable environment, as perhaps it would do in the case of a good many others. Exactly what happened on a certain tour which he was making in the course of his duties could never be learnt, there being no witness. All that was known was that the bullocks, with the coach he was travelling in hanging on somehow, came to a standstill of their own accord in the first village they reached, bearing all the evidences of frantic effort impelled by terror. Blood was spurting from their nostrils, and they were almost broken-winded, falling down from exhaustion the instant they stopped—but safe! A dog that had been his master's coach companion (taken, it was rumoured, to be thrown as 'a sop to Cerberus' in case of attack by the way) stumbled in, absolutely spent, his sides and feet torn and bleeding from the flints and thorns encountered in his headlong race—he was safe too! And the driver? There was none; but there was blood on the box and on the wheels, in the spokes of which some rags were caught. The poor fellow had evidently been dragged away to his death. And the young gentleman himself? Well, he was safe too, and lying on the floor of the coach in a swooning condition, with his undischarged rifle beside him. That betrayed him. He had not raised a hand to succour his poor servant, exposed to attack, and without means of defence.

How it happened that the bullocks arrived as they did

with the coach still on its wheels was a wonder, for the route they had taken was easily traced. Knowing that they could not have moved through the forest, they had kept all the time to some sort of cart-track, choosing that leading most directly to a village; and this although it was dark and the ground was quite new to them, their instinct, or maybe their sense of smell, guiding them towards human habitations and security.

How long the stalking of that coach had been going on none can say, but at any rate the end must have come very swiftly at the last. The tiger would take good care to keep well to windward of the bullocks, stealing after them cautiously, all unsuspected till alongside and his destined prey within reach. Then, once the keen-nosed bullocks smelt tiger, nothing could restrain them; they must have broken into a maddened gallop at the same instant that the spring was made upon their driver.

Can any moment be more awful than that in which such a victim first perceives his doom close upon him, in the form of *something* pacing beside him with noiseless footfall, glaring up at him, perhaps, before he makes his spring? For he must know that these are the last seconds of his life—one pang of mortal agony, and then, pray God, unconsciousness. However, no one who has not gone through such an experience can realise it, so it is vain to speculate. Happily the agony must be short—that is the only comfort.

The result of this affair was that not a man would remain in the service of that *Doray*, neither would any others enter it. Therefore, as in India existence is not possible to Europeans without servants, he could no longer stay there; besides which, public opinion, very frankly expressed, would have taken him long to live down. So he was driven to resign the service, which suited him no better than he suited it.

Tigers have their moods. This, a story told us by a friend

—a Mr. L.—will show. He said that once when he was staying at a hill station in Northern India—its name I have forgotten—he managed to twist his ankle when taking a stroll one evening, and sat down by the roadside to wait till some person should pass, who would either get help for him or give him a lift. A man with a bullock-cart was the first to come along, and with his help he clambered into the back of it. A little boy was sitting in front. Presently the moon rose, bright as day, showing up everything clearly. With sharp angles at intervals, there were long straight stretches of road; a wall of rock rose on one hand, and the precipitous hillside sloped away on the other, a bushy, grassy bank serving for parapet. As they were crawling up a steep gradient the driver remarked quietly and coolly that he saw a tiger lying on the bank a little farther up, his head their way, so that he must also see them; he thought they had better go straight on without change of movement. Mr. L., looking through the cart, saw that it was as the man said: a tiger was lying there quite at his ease, watching their approach. In a moment or so they were abreast of him, and it would have been only natural if the bullocks had bolted either then or sooner, but they simply padded past without looking to right or left, or showing the least sign of fear. The mat cover of the cart momentarily hid the tiger from their view, but when he was again visible—through the back end now—he had not changed his attitude. He never moved, beyond turning his grand head slowly to gaze after them, as might a friendly old cow in a pasture; and though the moonlight shadows presently veiled his body, his eyes glowed like lamps, and were clearly seen for quite a long distance after they had left him behind. Mr. L. told us he did not know what he had expected to happen—something surely; but nothing whatever did happen. On asking the driver what he would have done if the tiger had sprung upon his bullocks, he



A Bullock Cart on the Ghat.

Hales & Co. Photo.


IMP - RIAL

received the astounding reply: 'Flung the boy to him before that!' 'Whose boy was it?' 'Mine.' The little nine-year-old fellow sat quite unmoved at these questions and the man's callous replies, just as he had done through the ordeal of the last ten minutes, showing all the apathy of a born fatalist—the inheritance of his race; not because he was either stupid or blind, for he and his (to our ideas) singular parent had jabbered unceasingly till the tiger appeared on the scene, but merely because it is the habit of their lives to take whatever comes. Such lives are beyond our comprehension, and must remain so until they be drawn into the net of some humanising influence. Mr. L. said he should forget all else of that evening's uncanny experience sooner than the father's hideous answer; indeed, animal and man alike had quite upset his erstwhile notions as to what was to be expected of a tiger or a father.

One of my weirdest experiences was sitting up all night in a *machan* with F. watching for a tiger which did not come; we only heard him or some other tiger roaring in a muttering, under-his-breath sort of way from hour to hour, sometimes farther off, sometimes nearer. Very chilly, cramping work it was, too, waiting for the night breeze to rustle the leaves around us now and again, that under cover of the sound we might shift our position and relieve our stiffened limbs. It would have been no use to choose a wild, blustering night, for we had to listen too. Not that I should have put any faith in my own hearing when it was a question of tiger; nevertheless, in the kind of life we led the senses do learn to interpret even the very silences.

On another occasion—an especially bright night—when we were perched up in the nearest suitable tree to the 'kill,' the expected quarry, a panther, did not come, but a tiger did; moreover, chose our tree to sharpen his claws on, standing on his hind legs to do it, exactly as pussy does. He saw us, and seemed inclined to await our descent, so there was no

help for it but to dislodge him, or he might have gone his way in safety, so regal did he look, with the moonlight showing up every bar and stripe on his coat.

Much more uncomfortable was the experience of a friend of mine, who told me how she had once passed a very *mauvais quart d'heure*, when, something having gone wrong with the howdah or the elephant, she was wrapped in a green cloth and set down amongst some bushes in the jungle, while the rest of the party went away after a wounded tiger. She heard a single shot, that sound which, as already said, gives rise to such unnerving feelings of suspense in a mere listener. However, in due time they came for her. The shot had taken effect.

When a dead tiger was brought into camp close watch had to be kept lest the whiskers should be filched, a tiger's whiskers being considered invincible charms against every misfortune under the sun. Several of F.'s best trophies had to be furnished with whiskers of stiffened horsehair by reason of such spoliation.

Not a trophy F. had—a head, or horns, or skin—but had its story, remembered to the veriest details ; the stories, too, of many he had not secured, clean misses from some cause or another, no man being infallible, and the wild things very wary and fleet ; and so they need be, with their own powers all they have to pit against the tiny pellet of lead on the man's side. Occasional bad shooting is one thing, mere bungling quite another, though even bunglers generally have sense enough to know that the skin of an animal which they have shot at rather than shot is a piece of evidence to be suppressed, and are content to buy their trophies, weaving quite clever yarns about them too. We have listened to a few such tales ourselves.

A Governor of our Presidency, no sportsman himself, at the end of his five years of office repeatedly asked my husband to let him buy his entire collection for his English

ıome, offering him a sum quite disproportionate in magni-ude to its monetary value. F. declined absolutely, saying that every item in its degree more or less represented to him his own life; to sell would be like selling his own flesh and blood, and that he could not. I only mention this to show the estimate some men put upon trophies of their own getting. At the same time one could give; and that F. did willingly, asking our guest, as he was that morning, to choose two or three—whatever he most fancied. These were two tiger skins finely set up with the heads on, a couple of bison heads, and, I think, an elephant's foot or two. Neither did they leave any perceptible gaps, so large was the collection.

CHAPTER XXII

A solitary week—Rollo—Huts described—A night prowler—A dark night and a pitched battle—A tiger's tactics with bison—Herd-boy drives off tiger—A foggy night—A tiger's mistake—Ibex kids.

It was our custom during the hot weather to camp for two or three months in the hills, where there was always plenty of inspection work to be done. It happened once or twice when we were there that F. was recalled to Coimbatore, our headquarters, to meet his chief, which would necessitate a week's absence at shortest; so I had to choose between going down with him into the throbbing, airless heat of the plains or remaining in cool comfort all by myself—servants and camp people not counting in my sense, though it could not strictly be said that I should be alone. Neither alternative was at all to my fancy; but F. had no choice, he had to go; moreover, he could get over the journey there and back a great deal quicker without me. If I went it would give additional trouble all round; the toil of bringing me up had been arduous enough, with all that was possible done to ease it. Besides, we should be leaving camp in about two months' time, so common-sense won the day; but I was very glad when that week was over.

The last thing F. said before leaving was to his best friend among the dogs, Rollo, a native hound with a nose that never lost a trail, a silent tongue, and tireless feet. Rollo was brought into our sleeping hut, shown his corner by the door, where a bed was laid for him, and told to look after me. He understood perfectly; he looked steadfastly in his master's face and listened while he was being talked

to, then left him, and laid himself down by me with his nose along the ground, moving his fragmentary tail over so slowly the while, and thus ratifying the trust.

Rollo was a dog so little given to caresses or frolics that he might have been misjudged to be surly, but he could always be reckoned on. The other dogs might or might not be fidgety, he never was. He knew when he could let himself go to sleep with both eyes shut, and when it must be with one open. So long as he lay unconcerned no one need watch or worry, but if he bayed they might be sure it was not for nothing. As to looks, he was ugly as some count ugliness, being drab-coloured with black patches, and scarred all over; crop-eared, too, on one side, having been worsted in one of a hundred frays. Moreover, being the sort of shaped dog needing a tail to finish him off symmetrically, he had lost his. A horse had trodden on it, and with F. away when the mischance occurred, perhaps the hurt was improperly treated; however, when he was told of it on his return prompt indeed was his surgery, for after a short scrutiny he pushed a flat stone under the wounded tail, and in another second had it off! Rollo stood up, ran round himself two or three times, and straightway forgot all about it, the wound healing very soon, with light dressings to protect it from flies, which last had aggravated the original hurt.

No money could have bought Rollo. Some one once said in our hearing that he was 'mean-looking.' A less appropriate adjective could not have been found, nor was it ever pardoned the speaker, who after all had only proved himself an *ignoramus* in dogs and dog faces by his remark; the truth being that this dog was especially magnanimous, showing it at any distribution of bones or tit-bits, when he would stand aside, letting who would snatch away his share—by no means because he could not look after himself, but because he knew so well he could. His ways being known,

however, Rollo was none the loser. Such was the fine old fellow, my bodyguard during his master's absence.

The huts we were living in up here were of split bamboo. The bamboos—a very large sort, five or six inches across—were struck on the joints with a heavy mallet, splitting them along their whole length; they were then flattened out and interlaced, forming very strong, hurdle-like walls which were impervious to rain, the shiny side being placed outwards, and the whole very closely set. On foggy or cold nights *dhurries* [1] were hung round inside. The thatched roofs were very thick, with wide eaves, and round the huts were deep trenches, as it rained heavily at times. In this connection I may mention a simple yet ingenious native contrivance for catching the (in some places) most precious rain-water. Large bamboos are split once, and arranged in graduated lengths on a slant, and askew, in suchwise as to carry it by so many converging streams into the receptacle below. In countries where they grow bamboos seem to be wanted at every turn and for every purpose.

When F. went down the weather was bright and the nights were not cold enough for the *dhurries* to be wanted, so through the interstices of the hut-sides I could see the red glow of the camp fire round which the men taking turns to watch spread themselves like the spokes of a wheel, now and again stirring the logs into flame with their bare feet to warn night prowlers to keep their distance.

Much preferring the noisiest songs and merriment to silence, I had seen that every one was provided with luxuries *ad libitum*, but they only went to sleep the sooner for their happy evening; and presently the camp became profoundly still, not an eye in it open except my own and those of the watchers, while to my wakeful nerves the forest around was full of exaggerated sound, though it might be only the cry of a night bird or the creaking of a bough.

[1] See p. 24, chap. ii.

even wished that Rollo would keep awake for company, so did his quiet breathing deceive me—to my comfort and best assurance. But in that very wish I was wronging him; for with him, to be on guard was not to sleep, and, true to his trust, while others slept—dogs and all—he lay awake, listening, to make sure before ever he spoke. He could smell, too, for towards morning, while it was still dark, I for the first time heard a rustling in his straw, followed by a low growl; he seemed to stand up, and then he bayed loudly. That same instant I heard something, and felt it too, just at my head, my cot being close up to the hut-side; and Rollo was beside me in one bound, going nearly mad, baying, barking, howling all at once, and pressing his nose up against the partition, a mere matter of half an inch or so between inside and outside. On touching him I found that he was quivering all over, with every hair stiffened in rage at something just outside that was quite audibly snuffing and breathing through the bamboo laths. It was only a second or two really, I suppose, but it seemed an age. Then the intruder moved on, and Rollo rushed back to the door (as I could hear, though it was too dark to see), using his best endeavours to tear it down, but it had been well made of wired bamboo, and stood firm. Nothing would try to get in that way, I was sure, so I was only fearful lest the door should give way before Rollo's frantic tugging. However, long before this, the uproar in camp was enough to scare off anything—men shouting, and dogs barking themselves hoarse to be let out. There was no pacifying Rollo, who was not used to being shut up when anything so much to his taste was going on out of doors. But the exciting cause was far enough off by now, and the people were coming round with lanterns to tell me what they proposed doing, namely, to search for footprints, and if, as suspected, they proved to be those of a tiger, to cut out the square of earth bodily for exhibition to the *Doray* on his return, in proof

positive of the presence of our visitor. Otherwise it was possible that he might think the affair had been magnified, perhaps even mistrust Rollo's nose; but the pugs could not be gainsaid. It turned out to be as they had guessed. The footprints were found in a perfectly distinct succession up to and round the two sides of my hut, the truth being that the tiger, happening to pass our neighbourhood in the course of his perambulations, had ventured to look round, the fire perhaps being low and everything quiet, and after stopping a moment to snuff at the appetising morsels so near him, had stolen round past the door; but Rollo's baying had let him know that he was scented out, so he quietly took the hint and slunk off, careful of his own safety before everything.

That was the one and only incident that marked this dreaded week, except that a sambur stag 'belled' one night, and Rollo showed how completely he was to be relied upon for discrimination. Being wakeful, I was reading, and heard the musical note ring through the air; so did he, for he lifted his head, and pricked up his ears to listen, then laid his cheek down again with a comfortable sigh. He knew it was no concern of ours, nor of any moment, except in so far that a stag, having winded something, had 'belled' to apprise or warn his herd. It is a clear, loud note, repeated at intervals, and frequently heard during the mating season.

One pitch-dark night after F.'s return we were sitting up late, waiting for the outbreak of a storm that was travelling towards us, both of us being so happily constituted, as we considered, as to downright revel in a thunderstorm. The rest of the camp was wrapped in slumber, not a sound anywhere, till a faint cry close at hand broke upon the midnight quiet—the tremulous 'mooing' of a bison calf which had somehow got separated from its mother, and finding itself alone, lifted up its voice to call for her. Then came the quick response, vibrating with pleasure and reassurance, the baby

moo ' piping up shrilly and quaintly in imitation of her deep-chested, organ-like note, the which—all in an instant—changed to an angry bellow. Almost simultaneously was heard the savage, echoing roar of a tiger. Such was the overture to the grandest, the most wonderful concert of forest-voices ears could ever listen to. The tiger, in search of prey, had come across the calf, made sure of it, and was confronted with its mother instead. We heard her furious bellowing, and the pawing of her hoofs as she tore and ploughed up the earth, beating him off with lowered head and threatening horns, all of which we could well picture just as it must have been taking place. At the same time, and, as it seemed, at our very feet, were heard the tiger's infuriated roars as he bounded from side to side in his baffled attempts to spring on her neck from behind the shoulder—his usual method—with the idea of weighting her down and disabling her, so that he could drag away the calf from beneath her body; her efforts, meanwhile, being all bent on covering it. And we had pictured it all truly, for we afterwards found the calf's tiny hoof-prints amongst her broad ones ; not many of them either, showing how still the terrified little creature had kept.

It much distressed us to know that bison and tiger must fight it out, the night being so inky black that F. could do no good by attempting a rescue. Impossible as it was to distinguish anything with certainty, had he interfered he might only have wounded one or other, thus making matters worse.

With such sounds of battle within earshot the dogs could not be expected to hold their tongues, and their resonant voices contributed to the confusion of noises that woke the echoes. Moreover, in the thick of it all, without our having noticed a change in wind or sky, a hurricane sprang up which would have whirled off our thatches but that they were made to withstand such onslaughts, while boughs and old

trees gave way and went crashing down all around us. Nothing heeded those two below, and the awful combat went on with unabated fury. When the wind dropped for an instant's lull we heard it more plainly, wishing much that we could see it as well, but I never remember such another night of Egyptian darkness. A black pall hung over everything, and that in itself must woefully have increased the difficulties of the bison, who could only follow the tiger's manœuvres by scent, whereas it was no hindrance to his cat's eyes—he could probably see where they all were.

In a moment or two the storm broke in good earnest over our heads ; then, what with the lightning flashes, which seemed to split the heavens, the artillery of the thunder, the enraged bellowing and roaring of the combatants, the barking of the dogs, and the noise of falling trees, echoed and re-echoed by the forest and the hills around, all the Furies seemed let loose, the whole being rendered doubly impressive by the dense and rayless gloom momentarily lit up with arrows and streaks of darting, rose-coloured light. But words are inadequate to describe it. I can only say what was going on in those awe-inspiring moments, and leave it for others to imagine if they can. As the storm continued a tree-trunk, seemingly at our very elbows, was struck by a flash of lightning and riven from top to bottom, with a report sudden and sharp as of ten thousand pistols ; but nothing checked or interrupted those two below. For nearly an hour they must have faced each other—the bison mother, frenzied with her instinct to defend her offspring, and the raging tiger, baffled, kept off, while perhaps famished and half-mad with hunger—the note of fury vibrating in each voice. Speak we could not, nor was there a human sound to be heard—all were awestruck.

How earnestly we hoped that strife would end in victory for the bison ! Powerless to help in the dark, with the least breaking of the clouds it would have been impossible for

F. to remain inactive, but there was no need. It did end as we hoped. The mother-passion lends force to the feeblest, and when allied to the mighty strength of a bison is well-nigh invincible. Indeed, the tiger must have been very hard set to try odds with her at all.

That he was beaten off we knew; for at length his roars dwindled to disappointed growls and snarls, frightful enough, too, but gradually lessening to indistinct mutterings as he retreated.

For a while the victorious mother and her trembling little one stayed where they were, for we could hear her soothing it, another note now in her voice, and fury dying out. No doubt she was spent, too, poor thing! her build being so different from that of her opponent; while he, with his lithe, agile body, could leap sideways or upwards or backwards untiringly, she, with her huge bulk, had enough to do to stand her ground in one spot, with the calf under her for safety, and if he came within reach to receive him on impaling horns. She knew, as we did, that the tiger was vanquished, not to return; a beaten tiger *is* beaten, and owns it by taking himself off, given the chance. All was therefore quite safe now, and she must get back into the herd. To do this she lowed repeatedly, the herd replying, many voices at a time; so, as that was the last we heard of them, we concluded that they all met and trooped off together.

In the morning we went down to view the scene of the duel, which, except for an intervening rock or two, was plainly visible from where we had sat listening, spellbound; one might have thrown a stone on to the spot, so near was it. If ploughshares had gone over the ground it could not have been more deeply broken up, but only within a clearly defined area, the earth being flung yards distant. Not a blade of grass or a shrub was left, but neither was there the least sign of blood or hairs, and it was a relief to know that

though the bison had won a signal victory, it was also a bloodless one.

A tiger's tactics with a full-grown bison are, in the first place, to get between it and the main body of the herd, and then to stalk it and stalk it tirelessly, allowing it neither rest nor sleep by day or by night, it being as natural for a tiger to cover leagues during the night as it is for the other to sleep. At length, too weary to travel farther, the hunted creature falls, and is soon overpowered. Even before it actually sinks the pursuer can leap on to its neck, and hanging there suck out the life-blood; for the exhausted bison cannot shake off the incubus, and has perforce to give up its struggle for life, fortunate if it be indeed dead before being devoured piecemeal. Once on the track, a tiger will never relinquish his quest till one or the other be worsted, and that is generally the bison—possibly a bull. Not even his grand strength can hold out against the effects of that sleepless week or even fortnight. In one case we knew for certain that the pursuit had lasted a fortnight.

As to the height of a cow bison I am not sure. F. never shot one, nor would any true sportsman do so except by accident, or if he were attacked. A bull may stand twenty hands at the withers; that would be a splendid fellow, a hand being four inches wide. The largest secured by F. measured nineteen hands three inches, and comparing it with the height of a big dray-horse, which is about seventeen hands, the tremendous bulk of a bull bison can be imagined. One that reached twenty hands fell to a friend's gun, but F. had many a trophy of nineteen. Smaller specimens he did not trouble to get—a matter he could gauge by eye.

The very next evening after that pitched battle several of our bullocks and milch-goats were feeding well within sight, when the little chap in charge of them, who had been

playing to himself on a sort of pipe, but was none the less mindful of his duty for that, suddenly sprang to his feet and tumbled almost headlong down the hill, waving his tiny arms and yelling at the top of his voice, not for help, he being equal to any such contingency, but at the object he had seen; we were in time to see, too, but hardly more than a whisk of a tiger's tail as he was chased off. That done, the urchin threw after the prowling enemy and his ancestors every bad name he knew—and he knew many—then squatted himself down at the edge of the bit of wood, the better to protect his charges on the hill above him, not with any idea of sacrificing himself on duty's shrine, but that, there being no man-eater about, he knew he was in no danger.

How soon these children learn their lesson I don't know, but they begin to be herd-boys in very early life, many not being above five or six years old. Their independence and almost impudent bravery, with their sublime unconsciousness of anything of the kind, had a special appeal for us, and the stock of *metais* for them was kept up as carefully as that of the luxuries of chewing tobacco, etc., for our regular camp retinue.

It was during this tour that a curious incident occurred one evening when everything was enveloped in rolling mist, the fire itself appearing but a red spark except to those close round it. A sambur stag was heard to 'bell,' then again nearer, and a third time close by; for almost at the same instant he galloped through the very midst of the encampment, a tiger full pelt after him. Both loomed huge through the fog, but were very indistinctly seen—as might be astral forms veiled in grey—just cleaving a passage, though we caught a glimpse of branching antlers as the gallant stag sped past. Both were come and gone in a flash, taking everybody's breath away. Examination by lantern light showed their footprints towards the camp, through it, and

beyond for some little distance, till the ground became too stony to reveal anything. There was no knowing how that chase ended, except that a stag being even fleeter than a tiger, and taking risky leaps where the other would hesitate, the chances were at least equal, if not quite in his favour.

Tigers were pretty plentiful in this neighbourhood—they generally are in a good game country—and their coats in the pink of condition, at the expense of that same game. One evening F. walked into camp followed by the beaters carrying two tigers slung to their poles as the day's 'bag,' and though satisfied not to have lost his time, his pleasure was not nearly so great as was his disappointment on another day, when two tigers gave him the slip, getting clean away, though he had come up with them close enough to be sure there were two by their diverse markings, the face of one—evidently an old fellow—being greyish, while the other was in his prime. That they were still to shoot afforded no comfort; the sting lay in the fact that both had got the better of him.

In an earlier chapter I mentioned that F. was at one time engaged in catching ibex alive in this same Coimbatore district, and it was, in fact, owing to the presence in camp of these creatures, with their overpowering, goaty odour, that we were nearly being sacrificed to a tiger's mistake. That he really did only make a mistake F. felt sure. Still it was one which, if not rectified in time, might have landed us beyond further concern in the matter.

The day's toil was over—for toil that ibex-snaring was—and all was quiet, it being the hour before dinner. It was getting dark, but hardly dark as yet, with enshrouding mists rolling up and making camp snugness seem all the more alluring. (We were in tents this time, it being a wandering tour.) Although the people with us were so numerous, the usually chattering crew were too much engrossed for

talk, watching and stirring the pots [1] on the crackling stick fires—the talk would come afterwards, never fear!

Wedged in amongst the cooks and their willing helpers were the dogs, for the most part quietly happy too, inhaling the rich, appetising steam—an earnest of what was to come, with only a low whine at intervals from some more impatient one who could not brook the delay, being unable to gauge the progress of his supper by peeping and peering as the human assistants could do.

Our dinner was cooking, too, and we ourselves were sitting close to the tents on a great heap of moss watching a pretty sight on the opposite hillside, where the grass had been fired, and the surface was charred and burnt quite black all over except where red, smouldering lines of light ran in and out, twisting and turning like fiery serpents. But while this was interesting me in a mild way, something else was riveting F.'s attention. To me the silence had seemed complete, when he said, very low, 'Hark!' and though I listened I detected nothing; then, 'Look! look!' at the same time pointing and staring downwards. I looked where I supposed (wrongly) I was meant to—at our feet—for a *poochi* (crawling insect of some sort); for all *poochis* were of unflagging interest to him. There was no insect, and I saw nothing, but in the selfsame instant found myself grabbed hold of and flung aside like any bundle among the tent ropes, heard, too, a ringing shout from F., which was caught up, prompt as an echo, by every throat in the camp; why, none knew or cared, except as following suit, probably from habit. But *I* soon knew, for F. beckoned me again to look, pointing downwards as before, and this time I saw the last few bounds of a tiger before he vanished among the rocks in the enwrapping gloom.

[1] These pots were kerosene oil drums, which as well as two-gallon tins make desirable, and eagerly begged-for, boilers when large quantities of food are preparing. After being burnt out with straw they are perfectly free from the slightest trace of oil.

It was hard to realise that brief span of high-pressure life, so quickly had it passed, lasting perhaps not more than two minutes, yet the story of which must, perforce, be so laboured in the telling.

Had F. wished to fire, which he did not, he could not have done so, for the rifles were at that moment lying in pieces on a mat, being cleaned ready for the morning. Over and above that detail, he was then on the track of a bull bison, with the which nothing must interfere, as a shot might do if heard, as it probably would be—sound carrying so far by night—and, as a consequence, would alarm the game and drive it elsewhere.

A small piece of forest lay to our right, and F. told me afterwards that he had caught a very slight sound from that direction—the snapping of a twig—which from its slightness he knew could only be caused by the passage of some animal, while a louder sound might easily be accounted for by the falling of a branch or fragment of rock. There were no human beings up here but ourselves, nor were any animals likely to be stirring then except night prowlers. When he had told me to look it was at something he could only make out very indistinctly (on account of the mist), as it was turning the angle of a rock below. It stole up the incline towards us, and crouched, and there being nothing behind its outline was clear against the sky. Then he saw plainly that it was a tiger, and, moreover, about to spring upon us; as he surely would have done but for F.'s promptness in showing himself. And as I was a dummy in this act he was forced to be quick, not to say rough, in getting me out of the way—a roughness for which I was grateful enough. My own laggard senses would never have seized and saved the situation. F. said, too, that he thought the tiger had only meant to creep up to some unwary dog or goat, perhaps taking us for such. In any case, it was an unheard-of thing that one should dare to get so close to the tents at all, and

in front, too, where he knew he could not be hidden; perhaps he was old, and his keenness of vision and scent diminished. However that might be, there was no doubt about the tiger's being startled and scared in his turn, for he went off pretty quick.

F. kept in his eye the very spot where the tiger had crouched, and upon measurement it was found to be but a few yards distant from where we were sitting, nicely within reach!

So enticing was our camp that the tiger could not keep away for long, and was round again a few hours later. Despite being discovered by all the dogs at once, judging by their excitement, so daring was he as to hang about till driven off at last by the men's torches, he was even *seen* before he would go, for the glaring light was thrown upon every corner; and if the fact of allowing himself to be chased away at last contradicts my assertion of his daring, that must be put down not so much to the men's antics as to the torches, for fire no wild thing can face. In all regions of the globe travellers will lay themselves composedly beside a few burning logs, assured of safety as far as prowling beasts are concerned, the spiral of smoke being warning enough.

Two ibex kids were born while we were up in the hills, but their mother abandoning them for some reason or other, they were brought up by hand, and throve apace. As they were not old enough to look after themselves when we had to return to Coimbatore, we took them with us, our intention being to send them back later on to their own natural habitat and mode of life, knowing that they would speedily find their bearings. This plan, however, was never carried out; for, to our great regret, the little creatures died within a short time of each other from a cause which we were at first quite at a loss to imagine, as they seemed to be in the best of health and spirits a few hours before. On a post-

mortem examination being made, in each of their stomachs was found a ball of hair as large as a tennis-ball—their own hair, which they had licked off and swallowed. Cats do this sometimes, bringing it up, and so relieving themselves; but we never knew any animal but our little ibex kids to die from this cause.

Having secured as many half-grown ibex as were required for the purpose already stated, F.'s attention was concentrated upon a bull bison, which, as I have said, was one reason for the tiger's being let off scot-free. We had come up with him a few days previously, but it was nearly a fortnight before his head and hide were to grace the camp. That following up of the quarry, with the turnings and doublings of craft versus craft, was the element in this sport which held such a special charm for F.—not the shooting; that he liked least. Experiences many and varied can crowd themselves into a moment, yet take long a-telling, but the story of what F. suffered at the horns of that bison, who cost him his pet rifle into the bargain (a piece of mischief not forgotten or forgiven), was after another sort, so here I 'cry pause.'

CHAPTER XXIII

Bison hunt continued—F.'s adventures—The preparation of trophies—The Churmers again—Two dilemmas—Bison calves—'Bux.'

F. and his men were up and off at peep o' day every morning, of set purpose to return with the bison that evening, and as regularly came back with the same story, that they had sighted and lost him, till one evening, when the return was made in an unwonted fashion; for F. almost staggered into camp, looking 'nervy' in a way utterly unlike him; dishevelled and coatless, too, with great rents in clothes warranted to stand almost any usage, and his belt hanging with buckleless ends—all of which could be taken in at a glance.

He lifted the belt ends, with the one word, 'Bison'; and to the murmured query, 'Did he do that?'—'He did.' That was all the explanation possible for the moment, continuous speech was manifestly beyond him; but that a whisky-and-soda, so reviving in ordinarily trying circumstances, was left unheeded, showed indeed that something very far from ordinary had happened. His men came clustering round the tent door, peering in, every eye fixed on that one face with an expression blent of wonderment, inquiry, and dog-like solicitude. Very quiet were they all for such noisy folk, striving, if it were possible by hard staring, to make sure that their *Doray* was not hurt to the death—the wonder being that he was alive at all. He had ascertained for himself that no bones were broken; but talking was an effort yet awhile, and the details of the story only came out in a disjointed way, to be pieced together gradually.

The bison had begun by dodging him backwards and forwards round a buttress tree, till his head swam, not giving him an instant's leisure in which to take aim. A buttress tree is not suited for climbing, the trunk throwing out walls or buttresses all round, and forming, as it were, stalls between. To be caught in one of these would certainly result in being pinned to the tree.

If the bison had not been in deadly earnest it would have been quite like a game; but half an hour of it had not tired him out, whereas F. was momentarily getting more and more dizzy. He knew that he could not keep up the movement much longer, and must fall, which would be fatal, so he started to run in another direction—*which*, mattered nothing; for there were no climbable trees in sight, only a few saplings, and it was very open country, without even the friendly cover of a rock, behind which he might take the instant necessary for getting gun to shoulder to draw a bead. However, quick as he was in changing his tactics, the bull was quicker, and though F. could not see he knew he was close behind him, and in his own mind anticipated the horrid moment when he felt the touch at his back and was caught up by the belt and tossed high in air. But that the belt, of heavy leather though it was, gave way, he must have been brought down again, to be either retossed or gored; as it happened, he was thrown to a distance, the rifle flying out of his hand and falling with metallic ring on to rock—dreadful sound to its owner! Then, from where he lay, hardly able to draw his breath and jarred to the teeth, helpless for the nonce to interfere or dispute possession, he saw the bull go up to it and stamp upon it deliberately as though to stamp the life out, which he did effectually—past recovery.

The rifle being well flattened out the bull turned angry eyes around and advanced towards F., pausing a short way off to lower and shake his head at him. Even in the face of

these threats, F. said, he still felt himself utterly powerless to stir, and on that account, and because he was in no sort of pain, he was beginning to think he must be paralysed; but at the bare notion of such a thing he found strength to scramble up from under the creature's very nose. It was breath he was short of, his legs would serve.

The men were at no great distance, one of them carrying the spare rifle, and they had their wits about them—so far as wits might avail—and were to the full as concerned for their master as for themselves. Watching his opportunity, the rifle-bearer darted sideways, dropped this last hope into the grass, and placed a stick upright beside it to enable F. to find it easily, all of them the while dancing and shouting like demons to distract, if possible, the bull's attention from its object. But no; it was not to be so distracted, for he never so much as turned an eye on any of them.

Running his best—a bad best after the tossing—F. must now needs stumble, but picked himself up, turning round so that he might at any rate see what was in store, the rifle being out of reach as yet. As he stood, so did the bull for a space, with his forelegs planted out and his hoofs dug into the turf, bellowing ferociously, and snorting with exertions so ill suited to him. In another second, before F. could slip to one side, he plunged forward full tilt at him, knocking him down and standing over him, the foam-flecks dropping from his mouth on to F.'s face.

That the next moment held but two alternatives seemed certain: either a second tossing, where one was enough; or to feel the point of a horn—the sort he was wont so greatly to admire—through his chest and pinning him to the ground. But as a man cannot think of every possibility, F. did not in his extremity guess what that moment held for him. The huge brown head bent lower and lower, till the bloodshot eyes were beneath, and it was in position for what looked likely to be the last scene in this act. There

was no time to ponder, only just to do as the moment suggested. He grasped the horns, was raised up by them, and balanced for an age-long second in the air; then, half-thrown, half himself springing to earth, tore ahead, without stopping to look behind.

And now happened one of those unexpected things that do occur once and again when mortal aid is past praying for. As F. ran in the direction of the rifle placed ready for him he noticed a sudden cessation of pounding hoofs behind him, but the bellowing and snorting were redoubled. He turned to look, and at the same instant the men's cries changed from desperation to joy and triumph; for lo! the bull had trapped himself. In his blind fury, heedless of his own steps, and only bent on annihilating his enemy, he had fallen nearly chest-deep into the wedge-shaped split of a rock, with all his feet in a bunch; and the more he struggled the tighter he stuck. But for this F.'s hand might not have steadied itself effectively to order; but now it was easy, even for his still shaky grasp, to fire the death shot at the hampered bison, and thus in the end to become the rescuer of the poor imprisoned beast; not to life indeed—that might not be—but from a death of protracted agony. Death, grim, and as it seemed inevitable, had loomed before F. himself a minute agone, and in the very next all peril was past!

Even such experiences were not enough to put F. off bison-hunting, his love of it went too deep; and, as I have said, no species of sport approached it in the charm it had for him. He admitted that in *degree* the events of that one day did go beyond the mark for sensations, but in kind they were the sort of thing he really lived for during these expeditions.

On my asking him afterwards where his thoughts were—if he had any at all—at the moment of being tossed, he said that he distinctly remembered thinking when his belt broke

that it was a case of the N.'s dog over again—that dog whose life was saved by her collar giving way when she was carried off by a panther.

The men had much ado to haul the great carcase out of the cleft where it was wedged before it should become rigid. Indeed, it took hours of tugging and prising with ropes and bamboo poles and crowbars, wielded *con amore* by brawny arms, before the task was accomplished; but first of all the head had to be severed and brought away. That alone is a serious bit of business, as I witnessed at another time, for the skin at the back of the neck is fully two and a half inches through. Another evidence of the giant strength of a bison, which I saw and well remember, was in the sinews of the hind legs—absolute cords of the thickness of a man's thumb.

When the head, slung on poles and borne by four men, was brought in, my part, as always, was to make a sketch of it, with careful measurements, for the subsequent mounting. Heads vary much in contour, and all F.'s trophies had to be set up exactly according to size and outline during life. The skin might stretch here, or shrink there in drying, but it was pulled or pinched to the proper dimensions over the clay-moulding on the skull and jawbones. My sketch also gave the general look—whether long and narrow, or broad and short. I have been called up at four o'clock in the morning to see a bison just killed near the camp—so near that the death shot was heard there distinctly. Great feasting was always the order of the day, and night, too, on such occasions, except among those—Hindus and some others—who might not eat of their sacred cow, bull being near enough allied to be forbidden. All the rest were in their glory; the dogs, too; and as long as the meat lasted nothing was to be expected of anybody. They would gorge themselves, sleep it off, and start afresh; so we left them to it; but the dogs had to be limited.

The way with the head, from which every particle of flesh and fibre must be removed before setting up, was to bury it, leaving the ants and other agencies to clean it perfectly, as they would do. It took several weeks for this process to be completed and the bones quite clean.

As a rule, we had with us among our beaters, coolies, etc., some of those little Churmers of whom dishonourable mention was made earlier, and who, being of no caste to speak of, objected to nothing in the way of meat, fresh or decayed, rather preferring the latter. However, they were necessary evils in a camp, for no one else could or would do their work, and to them was entrusted the skinning, under the *Doray's* eye; they could be left to themselves to scrape off every atom of flesh, so greedy were they and so thoroughly did they enjoy their job.

One evening, on reaching the confines of the camp, we were assailed by a horrible odour, and F. said he was sure these folk had dug up a head, which proved to be the case. They thought it had been buried too soon, with too much good food on it, which they begrudged to the moles and the ants. In any stage of decay meat was meat to them, and presently we came upon them enjoying themselves to their hearts' content, although it must have been seething with maggots. They cried on all occasions, these strange beings, and did so now. Seeing the *Doray* coming they all got up, and without venturing nearer, begged with tears in their eyes to be allowed to keep the head a while, promising to re-bury it for good when they had done with it. After a show of anger at their daring in digging up what the master had had buried, F. gave the permission they asked, with orders to take themselves and their *bonne-bouche* farther off.

The odd thing is that these people are always well and strong and healthy-looking, whereas by rights, or rather by every rule of hygiene, they should be quite the contrary, eating any sort of carrion as they, and even their tiny

children, do. What a village dog would refuse *they* will eat. Owing to their rank odour they could not be employed in any other work about the camp than skinning and rough, temporary tanning, when such was wanted of them. We used to think they rather congratulated themselves upon this, as, of course, they shared in all else that was going. Yet they certainly have their uses, as was once proved to us by their absence when a bull bison had been 'bagged' and there was no one able to carry the head. As caste men, those with us might not touch a dead animal, and F. had to manage severing the head by himself, while they, with all the will in the world, could only look on. One man could not carry that head alone, but F. was determined it should not be left there, even if the carcase were. Night was falling, and it was a long step to the camp, or there were plenty of less rigid caste who would have been glad to be fetched, and so keep all the meat for themselves. As for the men who were with us, though they constantly had their treats when sambur or pig or buck ibex were slain, that recollection would not make it a less bitter trial for them to have to watch a feast in progress and be unable to partake.

However, if a coach and four can be run through any Act of Parliament, so it is with caste on occasion—provided nobody knows!

Among the men present, inactive against their will, and debarred from the prospective banquet, was Botha, already mentioned as a special bearer of mine. As I stood watching the scene I caught a fleeting glance of wonderful intelligence and complete accord crossing betwixt his merry eyes and the *Doray's* grave ones; only by F.'s subsequent action could the nature of that Marconi communication be guessed at. By a wave of his hand he flicked a few drops of blood upon the men standing round, at which they all looked properly aghast, yet were none the less very much obliged

to him. Their caste was broken, but the deadlock was at an end, and the rest of the tribe away in the villages need never know. After this the work went forward without a hitch, and in the evening, when the boiling and roasting were in full swing, all prepared to pretty near burst themselves. Caste was forgotten—were they not all in the same boat together now ?

F. said afterwards that he was in somewhat of a quandary for the moment, but that two things were equally fixed—that the bison head had got to be safely lodged in camp that night, and that the men knew it, and meant to take it there. All the same, he could not order them to do it, slaves though they were to his every word and sign in all respects save this one of caste. Talk of looks of affection, of anger, of scorn, or aught else, none could exceed in eloquence that of imploring greediness in the circle of eyes around, which was indeed the illuminating source of inspiration to F. Botha could read the minds of his brethren by his own.

This serio-comic bit of by-play, acted now for the first time, was repeated over and over again when occasion arose, but *spoken* of neither then nor afterwards.

It befell once, when the men had just brought in gleefully a fine sambur and laid it down still tied to the slings, that, while standing beside it, I touched the body with the tip of my shoe, perhaps by way of emphasising some remark, knowing no better at that time. They noted the momentary action, and instantly their joy changed into sorrow ; for now they might not eat of it ! All that fat beast was lost to them, a foot having touched it ! Luckily F., too, had noticed. Deprecating the catastrophe as much as they did—and truly, for he objected to such waste—he declared the meat to be unfit for anybody's food, ours as well as theirs, until certain *munthrams* (charms or incantations) had been repeated over it, and said that in this case, as it

concerned us as nearly as it did them, his *munthrams* would be as efficacious as any used by their priests. Every face cleared at this assurance, and the men listened trustfully, nothing doubting, a shadow of awe creeping over each, while E. slowly chanted several verses of nursery rhymes, accompanying them with appropriate gestures. Thus was a serious dilemma—for serious it was to our easily grieved, if easily comforted, people—met and turned by adroit handling. But if I shocked these very punctilious people on that occasion, so did they me on another, when I saw one of them pressing the contents of the entrails of some animal yard by yard into the cooking-pot a-simmer on the fire, yet throwing away the mere enveloping membrane as something unclean which might not enter their food; while the others sat round watching, and raising no objection!

One evening the 'bag' was a live bison calf, covered with soft and longish red-brown hair; a pretty little creature, which a man carried on his shoulder. Led by its piteous cries, they had traced it to a native trap—a deep pit, with boughs laid lightly over the mouth. What had become of its mother we never found out. She would never have left it of her own accord, for it was very young; and perhaps it frotted for her, as it soon died, though it seemed to thrive well on the goats' milk we gave it. With another, which was destined for the 'Zoo,' we succeeded better, and it was shipped comfortably, with all planned for its well-being; however, we heard afterwards that it had succumbed to sea-sickness.

Yet another catch was a baby elephant that from first to last was nothing but a credit to his keepers. He, too, was traced by his squeals, and found in just such another pit as that into which the bison calf had fallen. These pits are a source of annoyance, though not exactly dangerous, to men, who can clamber out of them with some trouble.

Difficult as it is to rear the wild things, for they seldom take kindly to artificial surroundings, we never had any anxiety about the little elephant, who throve apace, neither pining nor ailing, though sometimes sulking.

At first he decided to take nourishment only by means of a rag, and would not look at a pail of milk to help himself; but one day being left alone with one, by way of teaching him, he made trial, and found the art of drinking so easily acquired that he never stopped till he had drained the pail of its last drop; then, finding that he was getting no more, his anger rose, and he lifted up his baby trunk and squealed, at the same time picking up and putting down again the—even at that age—ready forefoot several times in quick succession, sure sign of an elephant's displeasure. Given as much as was good for him, namely, two gallons a day in the beginning, he finished up the milk regimen of infancy by demanding his six gallons. If that seem hard to believe, it was not so to him to drink that quantity, as he did daily, none being booked to his account wrongfully; and if he kicked the pail over for fun, he was not the loser. Fresh milk in such quantities was out of the question, but condensed suited 'Bux' quite as well. His appetite was the same when he began to take solids; boiled rice, and *gram*, like the horses, with vegetables, plantains, native bread, and, of course, forest leaves and boughs by degrees, as he grew—nothing came amiss to him. His accommodating disposition helped him to thrive—accommodating, that is, according to the general habit of men and animals alike, just so far as all went as he liked and he had both plenty and variety within trunk reach. But the instant he missed anything, or suddenly wanted what was not to be seen, having, perhaps, been given boiled rice when he fancied soaked *gram*, or cocoanuts instead of blocks of *jaggheri*, then his way was to go off by himself to sulk, refusing all overtures, even if offered what we knew he really wanted, or else

to flare up angrily and run to butt at the first person in his way, when such was the force of the impact that if taken by surprise the person was pretty sure to be bowled over. I was many a time, sometimes in play, sometimes not; but as he grew older that phase passed away, and the unreasonableness of babyhood was succeeded by an affection that did not depend on needs alone, and the gentleness, so characteristic of the grown elephant, dawned through his roughest gambols.

It was very pretty to mark that instinctive self-control growing with his growth, exactly in the same way as one sees it do in puppydom. Every pup alike, patrician or plebeian, apart from gnawing at anything hard to help itself on in its teething, tears and bites ferociously at the patient mother, or the hands that minister to its wants, all in frolic; later he merely mumbles, till, as an adult dog, he will take your hand in his mouth without your feeling the touch of a tooth. He knows now that he could hurt, and he wouldn't do so for the world.

We kept 'Bux' for several years, and then he went to live with the other elephants, eventually being made over to the Government with a view to his earning his living some day, only on the condition that he should always be retained in F.'s district, wherever that might be Not till he should be fifteen years of age would any work be required of him, beyond, perhaps, the fetching of a few boughs, etc., daily for his sustenance during the night.

CHAPTER XXIV

Jugglers—Initiates—Hypnotism—Telepathy—Indian impressions.

FEW, I suppose, who have looked their last on India but give an occasional backward thought to those mysterious sons of hers, the jugglers.

No one would use that word as descriptive of European conjurers and their bewildering tricks, but I know no other so fitting here.

The Western conjurer has an array of all sorts of stage illusions at his back; the Eastern juggler has no stage except the lawn or gravel, whereon he sits cross-legged in front of one's bungalow. I do not say that there are no illusions. The conjurer may pull his sleeves up and down to prove that they hold no rabbits or bowls of goldfish; the juggler wears no sleeves. He unconcernedly lets any who will walk all round him, but none would be permitted to make so free with the conjurer, who has his helpers behind the scenes or maybe among the spectators. The juggler's troupe consists merely of himself and his boy, the latter carrying a basket on his head with a few necessaries.

Some may think that the last word has surely been said about the 'mango-tree' trick, and the 'basket' trick (with its reappearing murdered boy), and many others. They have been imitated in European lands successfully enough as to results, but under such contrasting circumstances and surroundings as to rob them of all glamour for those who have seen the originals. For the benefit of those who have not done so, the wonders as shown in India may be briefly described. Before your eyes a mango stone is buried in

the mould of a little flower-pot and then covered over with a black cloth—always black, there is no deviation from that rule. Presently this is whisked off for you to see that a tiny green shoot is appearing through the mould. It is covered up again for a few moments, but you notice that the cloth does not now lie flat—there seems to be something pushing it up ; and so indeed there is, for when it is again removed to allow another peep, the shoot has become a sturdy little plant, throwing out leaves. Again the cloth is laid over it, but very gingerly this time, for fear of injuring the delicate tip, and again you wait. You would dearly like to see beneath the cloth, as perhaps the juggler guesses, for he carefully lifts the flower-pot up bodily in his two hands that you may satisfy yourself that there is nothing under it but the ground on which it stands. When he again uncovers it there is a white bud and blossom ; the next time, behold ! the little tree has borne a mango—an immature green thing. Then, when you have stared at it long enough to make sure you are not dreaming, it is veiled for the ripening—the last stage before the final one when the warmly-tinted, perfect mango is plucked and offered for your acceptance, to be eaten, not only looked at : an unmistakable mango, luscious but indescribable.

It is hard to say what my thoughts were when I first saw that done and tasted the magic fruit. Doubt as to the reality of the thing was impossible, yet to my perception the juggler did no more than I have said ; that is, he alternately covered and uncovered the flower-pot after planting his mango stone, playing between whiles on his little droning instrument much in the fashion of the snake-charmer. Afterwards flower-pot and fairy mango-tree were bundled unceremoniously into the basket.

Not then but later I was told why it is always a black covering that is used—it is to exclude light. I was reminded of the fact that the early processes of Nature are carried on

in the dark, out of sight, alike in the vegetable and animal kingdoms; thus the seed germinates and the embryo takes shape. So that the mango 'trick' is not a trick; it is but a hurrying on of Nature's own methods through a knowledge of her laws. Whence that knowledge is derived I was not told, and I do not know, though the Initiate knows, and so does the wandering juggler; but ever afterwards, when that 'trick' was done before me—which was often, *for it was the one I liked best*—it gave me a sense of awe far above mere wonderment.

Two other things that particular juggler did may sound simpler, though we could scarcely believe our eyes when we saw them done. First, he took out of his basket a packet wrapped in a piece of coarse cloth, which he unwound very carefully, and showed us about fourteen brightly coloured powders folded in separate papers; next he asked for a large plate, and a dinner plate was brought. Then:—

(1) He shook the powders out in little distinct heaps round the edge of the plate.
(2) He swept off each heap into a paper and tipped it into his mouth.
(3) He spat the powders out again—still as powders, there was no change in their condition—in separate colours in a circle round the plate exactly as they were before.
(4) He put the powders back into their papers, and wrapped all together in the cloth to be packed up.

Then just by the way, as it seemed, he drew an end of coloured cotton out of his mouth, and went on drawing it yard upon yard, till it lay in quite a pile on his lap. Very pretty it was, and of all tints, one merging into another most delicately—such cotton as none of us had ever seen before. When the other end finally appeared the juggler wound it all round a twist of paper, and pushed it into the basket

as of no account. The cotton was in a perfectly usable condition as it came out of the man's mouth, apparently no more affected by being there than were the powders ; yet his mouth looked the same as other people's. Contrary as one would suppose these little exhibitions (like the mango trick) to be to the inherent nature of things, nevertheless it was done by the juggler. I have no explanation to offer ; I only submit a statement of facts, or, I should say, of facts as they appeared to us.

I have tasted rice that I saw boiled on a boy's head, the boy meanwhile laughing because he had been bribed with a rupee to let his head be used as a fireplace !

The juggler began by asking for rice and an earthen pot such as natives use in their own cooking. These requirements having been brought, he invited some one of our servants to take part in the exhibition ; but they all hesitated, till we bribed a stable-boy to submit to the ordeal, he being assured that not a hair of his head should be hurt.

First, the juggler removed the boy's turban, and substituted for it a pad for the steadying of a small iron plate to hold the fire, which he then neatly built up of sticks and charcoal. Wind-fanned, it very soon kindled, and he set the pot of water on to boil. The instant it did so he threw the rice into it together with a pinch of salt, and then we had to wait the necessary fifteen or twenty minutes while it was cooking—no magic about that.

Meanwhile the face beneath the fire was an interesting study. Having begun by expressing fear coupled with greed for the promised rupee, as the boy, so to speak, warmed to his work, a smile gradually broadened across it when first the crackling sticks and then the bubbling water gave assurance of a brisk fire well alight on the top of his head, yet causing him no discomfort.

In orthodox fashion the juggler cook now tested a grain of the rice betwixt his finger and thumb, and finding it was

just right, took the pot off the fire, drained away the hot water, and dashed cold on. This done, he handed the rice round that every one present might taste it, which we did—fireplace boy and all—and pronounced it done to perfection.

This trick, I heard, admits of an easy explanation, but I never learned what that might be.

At a garden party given at Lahore, in the Punjaub, a specially noted juggler was to be the main attraction. Four of the guests, knowing something of this man's attainments, arranged with their host and hostess to go to different parts of the grounds, taking with them their cameras, as well as pencils and paper, in order afterwards to compare notes amongst themselves and with the other guests.

For assistant this juggler had only the usual boy carrying the basket on his head.

Some of the marvels exhibited were new, others old, but none the less baffling. When the man proposed to do the 'basket' trick, as it is called, it was at first vetoed as too familiar to be of much interest; but he said that he thought his was not so, and asked leave to show it, which was, of course, accorded him.

In the usual version of this trick the juggler thrusts a sword several times through and through a basket with a boy in it, each time drawing out his reeking weapon to the accompaniment of agonised outcries from the victim. The next instant up capers the boy, from no one knows where, and the basket being opened is found to be empty and innocent of stain. This man's version was of another sort.

Out of his basket he took a big roll of girthing—the kind used with saddles—and threw it into the air with all his might. Up it flew its whole length, and stayed there; whereupon the boy was seen to climb it, hand over hand, high above all heads, on and on till out of sight! Then the

wicked juggler drew his sword and slashed the girthing through, causing it to tumble down in a heap. Dreadful screams were heard, followed by silence, while mangled limbs together with drops of blood were seen falling to the ground. No wonder women fainted! Then, while consternation and horror still tied every tongue, the juggler called out, '*Idthereo!*' ('Come here!') and instantly the slaughtered boy came running back, nobody seeing whence, and plumped himself down on the grass safe and sound, and quite careless of the sensation he caused, before the nervous people who had fainted had yet 'come to.' There lay the girthing twisted about on the ground, and the sword beside it, but where was the dread shower that every one had seen fall? There were no signs of it!

At this point the gentlemen of the cameras appeared, and the first person they spoke to was the juggler in his native Hindustani, who showed as much intelligent interest in their proceedings as any one, though making no comment.

The written notes they had made tallied with each other, as with the observations of every one present, in every particular right through the performance; but the cameras gave the lie direct to all such evidence for the climbing of an impossible ladder or the falling of broken limbs. The plates intended to perpetuate these scenes among others showed nothing of the kind!

A juggler's tricks are his means of livelihood, so no questionings are permissible, but the thirst for elucidation here was very keen, and spoken of openly. A little English may have been included in this man's stock of knowledge, and the gist of the talk all around not lost on him; however, he gave no sign, nor vouchsafed a hint. In silence he packed his basket, relaxing only so far as to allow a non-committal smile to flit across his face at some one's remark that 'the girthing was still all in one piece, so the sword could only have cut through empty air.'

An account of this affair was drawn up, to which very many of those who witnessed it signed their names—names well known in the British official circle, civil and military, of Lahore society. The signatories were therefore people who were generally credited with the full use of their faculties, and who up to that time had so credited themselves. This declaration was afterwards published in the *Pioneer* and other prominent Indian journals of the day. Nevertheless, not a few persons, while certain of what they had seen and set their names to, were equally certain that there had been nothing to see; which seeming paradox expresses the simple truth, that the whole thing was hallucination induced by hypnotism, a subject of study through all ages in the East, and in which the jugglers are past masters. Doctors of science, with decorations and honours galore pinned to their coats, who live to contradict one another—ay, and themselves too—year by year, in London, Paris, or Vienna, might have sat with advantage at the feet of this Gamaliel—a man with only a couple of yards of cloth for wardrobe—who knew more about hypnotism and kindred subjects than do they all put together; knew, perhaps, all there is to know.

Jugglers are born, not made. I am not speaking of the mere trick-mongers of the bazaars, but the true magicians, who are not common nor easily found. The otherwise universal rule of the son following in his father's steps is put aside here if the infant be unfitted, in which case another boy is adopted instead, the horoscope cast at the birth of every child being an unerring guide. The stars cannot lie; they are an open book for those who can read them.

Another noted juggler gave an exhibition of his powers at a garden party in Bangaloro, the host being Major M., the Political Resident there. Bangaloro is the capital of Mysore, in the Madras Presidency, and has such an English climate that plants and shrubs common in our gardens at

home thrive there in perfection. It will not, therefore, seem strange to speak of a wistaria as growing luxuriantly on the walls and porch of an Indian bungalow.

When wonder after wonder had been reeled off, Major M. asked the juggler, in Hindustani, if he could do anything in reason that might be proposed by an outsider—by himself, for instance? Without hesitation the man replied that he could. Looking at the wistaria, Major M. said: 'Then bring that tree off the wall and put it back again.' This he called something in reason! However, it did not seem to raise a qualm of doubt in the juggler's mind. Not a muscle of his impassive face moved. Having accepted the challenge already, he merely bent his head in token of his readiness to take it up. He had stopped his droning music for a while, but now began it again, accompanying it with chanted words, apparently directed to the object of the incantations—the wistaria. Some two hundred people were present, and one and all declared afterwards that they beheld it detach itself from the supporting lattice, sink gradually to earth, and lie prone for an appreciable space of time; then lift itself up, and slowly return to its original position, firmly entwined in and out of the woodwork.

This was so staggering to a belief in things generally that, contrary to rule and tradition, Major M. then and there made the juggler an offer of five hundred rupees (about thirty-two pounds) to reveal to him privately the source of his power. The man said that he was willing to do so, on his part, but that first he must be allowed a word with Major M.; if after that the offer were repeated he would comply immediately. So the two went away together to a distant part of the grounds. They were gone for a full half-hour, and came back together, the juggler looking nothing different, but the other as if he had heard or experienced some uncanny thing.

Later on Major M. gave his friends the gist of the inter-

view. The man had begun by saying that he could communicate the source of his power, but that he knew it could never be used by the English *Sahib*, who, though now offering such a fortune to learn the poor juggler's secret, would, he believed, gladly give double afterwards to unlearn it, and he warned him earnestly against pressing for it. Nevertheless, Major M. said, he was foolish enough to persist, and the dread knowledge was now his. He was also free to speak of it to his English friends if he chose, and this was it: The juggler had sold himself, long years before, to the *Shaitan*, who was a cruel master and made his own conditions—the hoary old legend of the compact betwixt man and the Evil One told in Goethe's drama, a legend, like others, with its substratum of truth, ancient, before History was cradled, amongst all races that ever existed.

That was the man's belief; the horrifying part to the Englishman being his unmistakable sincerity in regarding the bargain as irrevocable and abhorrent, as shown by his reiterated warnings to the other to beware of knowledge so accursed.

At the time this occurred we were away in the wilds as usual, but we heard about it afterwards from Major M.'s son, who was one of the privileged witnesses of the mystery. Hypnotism again, undoubtedly, and this juggler perhaps not so highly trained or so susceptible as the Lahore man, who had got beyond searching on the physical plane for a key to the psychic—a sort of knowledge his which comes not by the light of nature.

An example of a somewhat different kind may be given. It was on this wise. The juggler was asked the same question or favour as in the last case—Would he leave the beaten track for something else that might be proposed?—and returned the same unhesitating, unconditional answer, that he would. The inquirer was a collector of coins. He went into the house and brought out a pocketful gathered from

all lands, and the juggler was bidden to describe them as one by one Mr. W. took them out of his pocket. This the man did without a single failure, giving the minutest details of each device on coins from countries of which it cannot be supposed he had ever heard, as Mexico, Denmark, and others. It was not through bodily eyesight that he did it, for he was seated too far off for that; besides, when Mr. W. closed his hand over some familiar Indian coins, that made no difference, he read them off as easily as the rest. Moreover, in the case of a 'Halli Sicca' rupee, before it was well out of Mr. W.'s pocket the juggler's face brightened in pleased recognition, that rupee being the coinage of the Deccan, from which state he hailed. Telepathy, I imagine, is the solution in this case, and it would have been interesting and instructive if some one else had handled the coins, some one who could not know them by heart or by mere touch, as did Mr. W. himself, unaware of it the while; for though he might think now and again that he had forgotten some, still their representations, or rather his knowledge of them, would be latent in the back of his mind for all time. The juggler, however, offered no explanation; he only said that he had never done exactly that sort of thing before, but knew that he could not be set anything beyond his powers.

It would please me to think that a word of mine could induce any one who has hitherto regarded a juggler—Indian or other—as a superior kind of mountebank, to change his opinion and accord him a meed of respect; for, at any rate, he can do what the rest of us cannot, except one be a reincarnation of Cagliostro.

'I cried when I was born, and I have been finding out why ever since.' That is an Indian saying met with in many tongues, alike in bleak Himalayan villages and amongst dwellers in glowing Ceylon: and with the excep-

tion of whole tribes—the Kurumbers, for instance, who are the most buoyant creatures—my impressions, after a good part of a lifetime in India, are of a melancholy people. An idea obtains in some quarters that they resent our rule; but I gathered quite the contrary from men whose judgment was founded on long years of observation. India is too vast to be massed together as a whole. A Parsee merchant, himself a traveller and a thinker, once said to us in the hearing of others besides ourselves, that beneath the sky of Hindustan were myriads of different races, creeds, factions, sects, and castes, who would willingly cut each other's throats were it not for the British *Raj*, which is the cord that binds together the faggot of India. Despite all that is said to the contrary, loyalty to the protecting hand is a national trait. Worse than not understood, her people are *mis*understood.

In the course of our journeyings, as every one does, we made a host of acquaintances and an innermost handful of friends. I know that in that little group of never-to-be-forgotten faces there are brown ones among the white, and I like to think that characteristics we have learnt either to love or disregard here may still exist when hope shall have become realisation.

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Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

Telegrams :
" Scholarly, London."
Telephone :
No. 1833 Mayfair.

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